

# Femme Fatales

April 28

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KIRSTEN DUNST  
"THE CROW III"

AALIYAH & LET LI  
"ROMEO MUST DIE"

LAURIE FORTIER  
"IN CROWD"

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"as Bad Boy's  
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# CAVEWOMAN



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## Femme Fatales Contents

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1-5

**The Luscious Ladies of Harvon.** Fantasy & Science Fiction

APRIL 28, 2000

Good evening. I'm seated on the elevated back porch of a century-old "haunted" house somewhere in the sprawling Valley, Maryland. It's nestled deep in the shadows of a wilderness that's within close proximity to Burkittsville, the site of **THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT**. Supposedly, somewhere to the west of the house, Arizonan personnel are scouting locations for **THE BLAIR WITCH SEQUEL** (cost: \$75 million. That's right, over 140x the budget of the original). And north of the house, literally a stone's throw away, a crew is shooting **SLEEPY HOLLOW HIGH** (it's **SCREAM** meets **DAWN'S CREEK**). It's shot on film. It's cast with an ensemble of disoriented actors who have developed a tolerance for frigid, hot temperatures and post-midnight shoots. It's directed not by neophytes but experienced filmmakers who have declined to negotiate with any further short-on-video versions. And it's budget, admits the 30-year-old producer, "is somewhere in the neighborhood of the first **BLAIR WITCH** movie. Maybe even lower. You don't need lots of bucks to breathe life into a good script. Earlier this year, **ANNA AND THE KING**—the \$75 million extravaganza with Jodie Foster—debuted to lukewarm reviews and it tanked at the boxoffice. It was a classic lost to budget." The '82 version of **CARNIVAL OF SOULS**, the '84 version of **THE WASHINGTON**, the original **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**—not that 30th anniversary piece of amateur onsp—**AND EVIL DEAD**. They were shot for next to nothing, but the filmmakers' enthusiasm was so unrestrained, so contagious. It's not about \$30 million salaries for actors & expensive special effects; filmmaking is simply about light and shadow. And, with our budget, we can afford to experiment with women's roles. Hence, we're previewing a couple of films—**AMAZON WARRIOR** and **CRIMINAL MINDS**—both fueled more on passion than on producing. Admitting to being a woman, we're talking about breaking & poverty line. Who will survive? A taste for me, a Diet Pepsi for Jenny. See you in 3 weeks.

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# HORROR'S "IN CROWD"

WILL THIS SCARY PIC APPLY A GRAPPLING HOOK TO CLICHES?

BY MITCH PERSONS

It's all a facade: **IN CROWD** actually camouflages itself as just another "dead teenager"/hooded-killer flick. A posh East Coast country club's newly enrolled femme begins to suspect there are dark secrets hiding beneath the gaiety and the clinked margarita glasses. And it turns out, of course, she is dead-on; one or all of the in crowd will do anything to prevent those skeletons from becoming public. Murder is definitely one option. *Hmm... sound familiar?*

"If you mean that **IN CROWD** is like **SCREAM** or **I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER**, well, no, it isn't," says Laurie Fortier, who plays one of the elitists. "Basically, it's about this group of kids who come from very wealthy, upper middle-class backgrounds, and they're all sons and daughters of wealthy people and they're all beautiful. They're the in-crowd, and pretty much anything they do goes without consequence, and they're just pretty debauched."

"The story begins when this girl, Adrienne Williams [Lori Loughlin], is released from a mental institution. As part of her probation, she is allowed to work at the country club where she encounters a group of kids and there's a leader

of the group called Brittany Foster [Susan Ward], who is the wealthiest of all of them. She sort of takes an interest in Adrienne, and lures her into the group."

"**IN CROWD** is not as in-your-face as **SCREAM** and **I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER**. And there is no scary monster and no hooded avenger running around with a grappling hook. There is, however, a constant, lingering feeling that something is just not right. You might say that **IN CROWD** is a combination thriller and psychological mystery. Throughout the film, you are trying to figure out which one of the girls of the *In Crowd*—if it is one of the girls—is responsible for the mayhem. But the horror, unlike that in the so-called 'slasher' films, comes



Erin Bartlett & Jay R. Ferguson are among the **IN CROWD**. Who will survive? Ms. Bartlett is currently co-starring with Alyssa Milano in **BUYING THE COW**.

in very subtle ways."

Fortier, who was featured in **DEAN QUIXOTE**, **TO GILLIAN ON HER 37TH BIRTHDAY** and the TV sitcom **BOY MEETS WORLD**, keeps a lock on whomever-dun-it, but is very candid about her own character. "I play a girl named Kelly. She's the most independent of the crowd. She is slightly tomboyish, always going off sailing in her little boat, always busy with some kind of physical activity. There is also a bit of a lesbian overtone as Kelly has sort of this crush on Brittany, which is kind of

returned—and when Adrienne comes onto the scene, Kelly is obviously passed out and saddened by it. Of course, the first person you suspect of all the ghoulishness is Kelly, because she has such a strong motive but, as the story unfolds, it turns out that Kelly is actually a very vulnerable person who just knows too much. What that 'much' is, I'm not going to reveal, but let's just say there are some surprises due."

**IN CROWD** is directed by Mary Lambert whose films oscillate from cheerfully subversive (**PET SEMATARY**) to experimental (**SIESTA**) to derivative (**PET SEMATARY II**).

The aforementioned Susan Ward, who plays Brittany Foster, co-starred with Keri Russell on a short-lived TV series, **MALIBU SHORES** ('96). The cast also includes Erin Bartlett, Tess Harper (**TENDER MERCIES**), Katharine Towne and Kim Murphy (**CAMPFIRE TALES**).

Warner Bros. is debuting the film during this year's Spring Break. □

Mary Lambert (**PET SEMATARY**) directs (l-r) Susan Ward, Erin Bartlett & Laurie Fortier. "Unlike slasher movies, **IN CROWD**'s horror comes in subtle ways," says Fortier.



# F A T A L E

## BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI

●Jennifer Lopez (5'11) plays a child therapist in how *Lina's THE CELL*. A serial killer has co-opted while authorities race against time to locate his latest victim—if she's still alive. Lopez utilizes an experimental program to penetrate the twisted psyche of the killer; she risks exploration of perilous territory to recover his prey. Vince Vaughn co-stars as an FBI agent. The rest of the cast includes Vincent D'Onofrio, Marianne Jean-Baptiste and Dylan Baker. The studio promises "ground-breaking special effects."

●Sci-fi stuns Barbara Crampton (RE-ANIMATOR, 1.1 & 4.37) and Kar Wuhner (GLIDERS, 8.8) star in *THEY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE*, which director Jim Wynorski describes as "a thriller, with jazz, about outer space. It's also about a female female who infiltrates herself into a family and seduces everybody." The movie reunited Wynorski with Crampton, who previously worked together in *CHOPPING MALL* (1985). "Barbara is still a doll," sighs Wynorski, "and she looks great in a sci-fi hot tub."

●Australian actress-model Gabrielle Fitzpatrick, best known to U.S. audiences as Nicole Pryor on *MYPO BLUE*, stars alongside Peter Firth and Charlie O'Connell in *THE MAGICKIAN*, a two-hour film for UPN. Every 1,000 years, the future of the Earth depends on the outcome of a titanic battle between the forces of good and evil. O'Connell plays Michael Devane, a street magician who is reputed to be the human world's savior. Taken under the wing of the protuberant millennium magician, Devane—preparing for the big break—faces serious complications. It seems his savior Elly, played by Fitzpatrick, has been "persuaded" to ally with the evil forces. Talk about a family feud.

●It will be a grueling two weeks for gorgeous Kim Dawson to wrap up the final 12 episodes of *BED-TIME STORIES*, scheduled for broadcast on Showtime, the hybrid-shell had to flip through 30 pages of script per day. Dawson stars in the TV series, a very loose adaptation of Luis Bunuel's *BELLE DE JOUR*, a 1967 classic starring Catherine Deneuve as a housewife who liberates herself from social repression and bourgeois domesticity by experiencing the lifestyle of a hooker.



A veteran of sleazy melodramas, Kim Dawson applies her film experience to *BED-TIME STORIES*; the Showtime series is loosely based upon *BELLE DE JOUR* (1967).

Kinky (is it a dream?) sex ensues.

The prime time Belle, played by Dawson, encourages "problem"-plagued friends and strangers to peak themselves at her little dreamstone for some therapeutic fantasies. "You know what kind of problem?" Dawson said with a wink. "Whatever the problem is, I try to create the situation which will resolve it for them. I'm just so good I can make it happen. In *First Love*, the pilot episode, Judy Dawson plays my long lost love who I haven't seen in years. He doesn't know who I am when he comes back to me looking to fulfil his family—which is to find me. That's when I decide I want to make everybody's fantasies come true because I had such good luck with my own."

A boy of Brimble Seides, all of whom drop a beat on Belle, includes Nikko Fritz (*ATTACK OF THE 99-FOOT CENTERFOLD*), who agrees to marry problems in the *Another Woman* episode. Sometime Phillips, the *PHANTASM* & femme, confesses an indulgence for infidelity in *Libel*. And Griffin Drew (*DIOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS*) plays *Tush or Dare*. "Griffin comes to see me because she doesn't have the life she thinks she wants," explains Dawson. "She keeps dreaming about this guy from her

past, I find him and she dates me to make sure they have a happy life together but it ends up that, after being united, they don't really like each other."

●Jedee Chan, take a hint. Here comes Jennie Chinn. An expert in Joel Kline Do, the San Francisco born Chinn stars as Lucy Cheung, one of the elite Hong Kong Special Forces, in *CODE NAME PHOENIX*. When a Chinese pharmaceutical company develops a youth serum, the stability of the world is threatened and Cheung is dispatched to destroy the drug. The mission fails and Cheung runs up against a sinister American conglomerate that's developing its own concoction. Chinn performed most of her own stunts in the futuristic action.

●Let's take a journey to an epoch of time battle of political corruption. Image Entertainment and Something Weird Cinema have re-imagined DVD distribution of a "gore trilogy" developed by director Herschell Gordon Lewis and producer David M. Friedman. The three disks include *BLOOD FEAST* (1963), *TWO THOUSAND MANIACS* (1964), and *COLOR ME BLOOD RED* (65). *BLOOD FEAST*, the story of an Egyptian catman who's cookin' curses in the kitchen, introduced Playboy Playmate of the Year Con-

nie Mason to the screen. Critic Richard Taylor gauged Mason's debut as a pretty dubious introduction ("She's horrendous! If ever there was an award for the worst horror film of all time, then this would win hands down.") Friedman became acquainted with Mason at a Playboy Club, where she was working as a bunny. The bubbly blonde was recently pegged #57 in Playboy's survey of Top 100 Playmates. "She couldn't act," Friedman admitted, "but she was a beautiful girl. She still looks like a million dollars." But her *BLOOD FEAST* salary was a paltry \$175.00, produced for \$24,500, the film grossed \$4 million.

Mason returned for the pair's second gore fest, *TWO THOUSAND MANIACS*, which was inspired by Lerner & Loewe's musical play, *Aladdin*. The ghosts of a Southern town, pillaged by Yankees a century ago, celebrate the centennial by dismembering Northern tourists. Hey, you know that you're a necktie if the film's theme song—"Oooooo—ooooo, come to the South's game room again!"—prompts you to organize a square dance.

A story artist adds human blood to his palette in *COLOR ME BLOOD RED*: he applies the red pigment to his paintings. Naturally, pretty models turn into involuntary donors. Best line: "They say Gauguin was atrocious, too!"

Each disk's bonus includes original trailers and extensive galleries of exploitation art. "BLOOD FEAST has 45 minutes of rare outtakes," said Something Weird honcho Mike

continued on page 40

Embarcled in controversy last January, Jennifer Lopez's press notoriety may sell *THE CELL*, her sci-fi movie.



# The Crow salvation

Crowned by James O'Hare, The Crow returns from the dead to balance the scales of justice. He's noting out more carnage in **THE CROW III: SALVATION**, avenging murders and possibly the reviews that shot down CROW II.

The script, penned by Chip Johannson (**MILLENNIUM**, **X-FILES**), chronicles the saga of a corrupt police force's impact on a small town. There's plenty of reason for the temperamental hero to be teed-off: lap dancers gyrate to the vibes of drug-induced rock, cops mutilate children and bodies vaporize in displays of pyrotechnical pageantry. In another part of town, the word "Daisy" is scrawled in blood on a dead man's shaved head and defiant lips are silenced with a needle and thread. We're not talkin' Mayberry.

Paradoxically, British director Bharat Narull insists the film's message has something to do with love and hope. "Some of the emotional scenes were really strong for me," said Narull, who makes his American debut with **CROW III**. "It's been great fun blowing up buildings and driving cars through houses. It's been spectacular doing big Hollywood stunts, stuff I've never done before with the likes of eight cameras. They've been great fun."

But the real strong moments for me are when Eric Mabius, who plays The Crow, holds Jeff Lyn O'Keefe (**HALLOWEEN III**), SHE'S ALL THAT) in his hands. There's this moment when a tear drops down her face. It was a huge closeup and very intensive. It's a very simple moment. But, for me, that

**NEVER MIND THE CARNAGE: THE DIRECTOR INSISTS HIS FILM IS A LOVE STORY—& NOT A SEQUEL.**

BY MICHAEL BEZLER



Eric Mabius notes his Crow 2000 "charged into his vulnerability of rottenness."

was an incredible moment. It's the simple things that make emotion. And that, I think, is the beauty about **THE CROW/SALVATION**, it isn't just about a guy running around blowing things up. It's a really strong love story at the heart of it."

Over four dozen writers and directors had pitched story concepts to producer

Jeff Most. Boh Zombie, White Zombie rocker, submitted a script about a future, gothic, post-apocalyptic Crow, although it was passed over for a storyline developed by Matt Greenberg (**MIMIC**). Zombie's scenario is presently being developed as a non-CROW feature for a possible future production.

Narull was recruited as a

result of his background in British television, filmmaking experience (**DOWNTIME** and **KILLING TIME**) and, more poignantly, his vision of a younger Crow. "It's funny, actually," said the director. "When I ended up in a meeting with the Presman people, I said, 'Look, why don't you make a 21-year-old Crow or an 18-year-old Crow? Let's bring it to the audience that goes to see it and make it relevant to them.' And, just by pure coincidence, the script was heading that way. So we got on really well, right from the start."

As a schoolboy, Narull shot Super 8mm films with friend Paul Anderson, who went on to direct **MORTAL KOMBAT**, **EVENT HORIZON** and **SOLDIER**. His enthusiasm unabated, Narull recounted, "The first day on the CROW set was great. That's because I sat in the bathtub about six months earlier and said to myself, 'Well, if I have like a green room over here and the colors look like this...'"

"Then, suddenly, all these ideas suddenly come to fruition. I walked onto the set on the first day and it's all sitting there. Suddenly, I have three camera crews, 35 trailers, every single actor I wanted to work with and I said, 'All for me!' It's nerve racking but really it's fantastic."

"We had a hall making it. We are working our little behinds off in every respect. We've had such a fantastic group of actors who have delivered the most amazing characters onto the screen. In a lot of respects, I must say, I've enjoyed this process of filmmaking more than any



**SALVATION:** T.J. & co's chick is a metaphor for corruption in Sawtown, USA ("It's like entering Hell," says Eric Mahius). Above: The roughen-rated hand-to-hand, choreographer David Lee holds Jodi Lyn O'Keefe. "Some of the emotional scenes were really strong for me, like the one where Eric [Mahius] holds Jodi Lyn O'Keefe" (HALLOWEEN #20).

other feature I've made because we are such a family. No one wants this to end. We pour ourselves into it emotionally, in a gut wrenching manner, during our work day. And I really think we've successfully made the most involving and exciting CROW feature to date."

Pacing on the Salt Lake City set, Narulli declines to peg his \$12 million production as a sequel: "This is THE CROW: SALVATION, it's not Part III. The only trepidation was repeating the past movies, so we made a strong attempt to actually define a new story, find a new angle on it and come up with a new way to tell the story. We didn't want to bore the audience with the same stuff. THE CROW was done brilliantly in the past. To even attempt to get where our predecessors managed to go would have been a difficult thing to do. So I think we had to come at it with a fresh take."



Narulli's clout on SALVATION included divorcing his Crow from Brandon Lee's interpretation of the role in the 1994 pioneering film—with one concession. "Early on in this process, I called Bharat," said Eric Mahius. "I had just started with a fight choreographer, David Lee, who did the BATMAN films and he's worked with Wesley Snipes, Sandra Bullock and Ashley Judd. A great guy. He's a little, tough British guy, who's a kickboxer in Malaysia. I started training with him and we were breaking the scenes down. Later, I called Bharat and I was like, 'I need about six years and I think I'll be ready, physically, for this part. Because that is what's going to be demanded.' And Bharat said, 'You have to calm down. The first film played to Brandon's strength and this one plays to yours.' That was exactly what I needed to hear at the time." □



**INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE** Dunst (left, with Christopher Gherard) best-out contender Christina Ricci for the coveted Claudia role. "Tom Cruise is easily out-nosed by an early precocious Kirsten Dunst," wrote critic Mookie Sullivan.



# kirsten dunst



## salvation

**TACKLING MATURE ROLES, SHE  
DISCUSSES CYBERSPACE, HER  
YOUTH AND A FEMALE CROW.**

**By MICHAEL BEELER**

A seven-year-old Ford model made her uncredited debut in a segment of *NEW YORK STORIES* (1989) directed by Woody Allen. Five years later, after a string of secondary parts, Kirsten Dunst beat-out some formidable competition—including Christina Ricci—for the role of sanguinary Claudia in *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE*. Initially overshadowed by headliners Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, it was Dunst who earned a Golden Globe nomination (Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role).

During the past six years, Dunst has earned admiration for deflecting rhetorical Hallmark valentines ("Boys frustrate me. I hate all of their indirect messages, I hate game playing. Do you like me or don't you? Just tell me so I can get over you?"). Her film roles range from the dramatic (*THE DEVIL'S ARITHMETIC* and *LITTLE WOMEN*, again besting Christina Ricci for a plum role in the latter film) to the





"Rate? When... if you eat rats, Louis?" Dunst, with Tom Cruise & Brad Pitt, earned a Golden Globe nomination for her *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE* performance.

darbly comie (WAG THE DOG and SMALL SOLDIERS). Though a couple of her films tanked at the box-office (DICK and DROP DEAD GORGEOUS), the 17-year-old Dunst is locked on Hollywood's A-list. When offered an opportunity to interview the actress, I hopped a jet and, within hours, arrived on the CROW III. SALVATION set in Salt Lake City, Utah. Dunst had been cast in the film as "Erin Randall," a role that exiles her from any pretense of "coming of age" angst.

"When I read the script of SALVATION, I looked at it closely," says Dunst. "Usually, girls in films—especially these kinds of films, where there is a lot of action—aren't dealt with much. But Erin does kick butt in this film. She doesn't stand back and just watch. I like that about her character a lot. It was a difficult role be-

cause she's dealing with her sister's death and everything. I really enjoyed the whole character.

Dunst describes her heroine as "a young girl who, in the beginning of the film, is definitely weak, emotionally and spiritually. She lives with her dad, she has no mom, her sister's gone. She's a very lonely girl. But

she eventually meets the Crow and helps him avenge her sister's death. I really think she comes to learn more about love. She also becomes much more of a tougher girl, who's independent and you see that she's a stronger person at the end."

The actress' initial attraction to the project was

prompted by the genesis of the title character. James O'Barr's storybook, *Illustrated in The Crow* comic book, was influenced by the tragic loss of his fiancée, who was slain in a collision with a drunk driver. Dunst was additionally interested in working with Bharat Nalluri, the London-based director (KILLING TIME and DOWNTIME) making his American debut.

"When I first heard the story of *The Crow*, and how the writer came up with the concept, I was really touched," she explained. "I really wanted to be a part of it. And plus meeting Bharat—I love his work as a filmmaker so I really, really wanted to work with him. The prospect was so appealing, and everything just came together."

Though intrigued by *The Crow*'s origin, Dunst admits that she had never seen the movies spawned

Dunst with Eric Roberts, as a resurrected crusader, in *THE CROW 3: SALVATION*. "My heroine is weak at the beginning. But she turns into this very tough girl at the end."





Daniella Monet (center), mentored by Drew Krieger & Nicole Saldarriaga, proves GREY PEVER is infectious. Cast in the Fall release as an "all American captain of a cheerleading squad," the actress was directed by Peyton T. Reed (LOVE GUN TV series).

by the comic book (1994's **THE CROW** and its 1995 sequel, **THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS**). Matter of fact, she never saw the comic book's TV spin-off (**CROW: STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN**). Matter of fact—

"Do you know what, I've never read the comic book!" shrugs Dunst. "I was never shown a Crow comic on the

set. Everyone on the sound stage kept telling me, 'Oh, we've got to show you this comic.' Everyone told me how fabulous the comic books were, but I never did actually see one. And, as I already mentioned, I refused to watch the **CROW** movies until I wrapped **SALVATION**. But now that I've done the third install-

ment, I'll definitely rent the videos. I haven't seen the TV show, either [laughs]. I never get a chance to watch TV, I'm too busy."

Heir to the role of the franchise's hero—previously played by the late Brandon Lee (94), Vincent Perez (96) and Mark Dacascos (TV)—Eric Mabius plays **The Crow** in Part III. Making his de-

but in 1995's **WELCOME TO THE DOLLHOUSE**, which earned its director (Todd Solondz) a Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival, Mabius was subsequently cast in independently-produced films (e.g. **A GUN FOR JENNIFER**, **MYTH AMERICA**, et al.). I was impressed with his kinetic performance in **LAWN DOGS**, which yours truly caught at an L.A. screening! The actor finally swam mainstream in last year's **CRUEL INTENTIONS**.

"I think Eric and I had a really amazing chemistry on-screen," says Dunst. "Every time I worked with him, it was just so intense. His eyes are amazing to look at. I think he expresses so much with his eyes in this film. He's very intense, you know. He's all about that kind of mystic, mystery man kind of thing. I think he's a very good actor."

Mabius, seated on a couch in producer Jeff Mast's hotel suite, reciprocates the praise: "My scenes with Kirsten were great, they're really powerful and resonant. I think Kirsten, certainly at her age—and that's the thing that excites me—is the most talented actress I've known."

**CROW III** was predomi-

Dunst and Gregory Smith in **SMALL SOLDIERS**, co-4 comedy directed by Joe Dante (THE HOWLERS). Critic Bill Gato noted the young actors' casting as "the well-timed, unmissable glitziest deal." The '98 movie was Phil Harrison's final curtain call.



nantly shot on location in Salt Lake City, which serves as a Smalltown, USA backdrop. Retaining the dark milieu of the first CROW, much of the 2000 release was shot during late hours. "You know, when I go to bed at nine o'clock in the morning and I wake up dazed and confused, it [snapping his fingers] drops me right back to why we're doing this," explains Mabius. "I just got so excited to come in every day. It's a pure labor of love." You hear that term thrown around a lot in Hollywood, but it's very true on this production. It's been like coming into a family. It's amazing."

The nocturnal environment kindled discussions between Dunst and the film's director long after production wrapped for the day. "We would just talk and have fun together," smiles Dunst. "I loved hanging around the set. Everyone was so sweet. I just got along with everyone. When you're home shooting in Los Angeles, I don't think you become as close to people. But when you are in a place you don't really know, you get to be closer with the people you work with. So we just talked about everything...you know...about life."

Dunst addresses my query about INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE with a wary "Yeah, I do get into heavy duty stuff. But then I've also done some comedies like DRÖP DEAD GORGEOUS and JUMANJI. But then again I did VIRGIN SUICIDES, which is also a darker film. I like mixing everything. I want to be sure that I don't just do one type of film."

"I have an interest in everything. You grow more as an actress by doing different kind of roles. I've had some adult roles before SALVATION. And I have stuff coming out also that is also more adult. But this definitely is a film where I am playing my own age, so it's not too far off. Erin is definitely more independent

## KIRSTEN DUNST

**"I get to fry this guy in an electric chair! My character in CROW III is not like a girl who just sits there and lets stuff happen. She kicks butt, which is unusual for girls in the action genre."**



"Who will take care of me my love, my dark angel, when you are gone?" Dunst and Brad Pitt in INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE. B: Dunst & screen dad (William Alter) move the execution of a murder suspect who makes a comeback after death (My headline's more independent than some of my past characters.)



than some of my other characters."

Compliant with her apprenticeship as a "more mature" actress, Dunst has been groomed as a woman slipping out of post-adolescence. There's the late night talk shows, posing in top designer fashions, magazine covers that stress a decidedly adult persona...

"So are you having fun in Hollywood?" I ask.

"Having fun?" Dunst grins. "Well, I've been working so hard lately and it'll be nice to come back home to the San Fernando Valley and relax. But I have so much more publicity to do now. I've just been doing so many magazine shoots lately, and I was just on Jay Leno."

"I'm 17 now and I'm dressing older. I'm growing up. Designers give me certain clothes, like the one I was wearing on Jay Leno. I think the dress was by D&G, from their younger line of clothes. I love their wardrobe. It is an older way of dressing but I like it. Hey, if you're going to go on the Leno show, you've got to look hot!"

Like Jodie Foster, who evolved from a tyke pritching Copperheads to an Oscar-winning actress, Dunst has quite literally grown up in front of the camera. "I started acting when I was really young," she recalls. "I was born in New Jersey. When I was about three years old, my mom started to bring me to auditions for commercials. It all started when I was in grocery stores: people would go up to my mother and point at me and say, 'Oh, she's so cute. You know, you should have her model and do commercials.' So my mom started me in modeling when I was really little. And I liked that. But, you know, I told her, 'What I really want to do is be on television.'"

"After that, I started to test for commercials. I soon booked my first commercial and I just kept doing them. I also did print work. Then I did little parts in movies



Dunst and Michelle Williams in *DICK*. Praising the film, Roger Ebert speculated: "Will *DICK* play for audiences who can't remember *Watergate*, for teenage Kristen Dunst fans?" Not exactly. Produced for \$12 million, the film grossed \$6.24 million.

like *BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES* and *NEW YORK STORIES* and all these little movies. They weren't all 'little' movies but I played minor roles. All these little parts were bits like 'young girl or I played the younger version of a leading lady in a flashback scene. Back then, I had to work my way up. Then I came out to L.A. for pilot season. And, like two years later, I got *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE*. And that's when my film career took off."

But before she drifts into her post-'94 career, Dunst once again turns reflective of the past. She recounts being hired as a huckster for kiddie-oriented merchandising, and subsequently developing a tolerance for taunting.

"My first commercial ever was for Kix cereal," she remembers. "Then after that, I did a commercial for M&M's candy. And I did so many doll commercials. Oh my God [laughs], there was this one commercial for a doll called Baby Oh-Oh. It poot and pooped in its pants. You can imagine, I

would be made such fun of by the other kids on the bus when I was returning home from school.

"It's so funny. All these kids would sing me the theme song of that doll's commercial. It was like [starts to harmonize], 'Baby Oh-Oh, there she goes!'—and it was like, 'Oops, she peed!' or something like that. I did some pretty embarrassing commercials when I was little. But I also did brand names like Ariel's doll from *THE LITTLE MERMAID* and Barbie and other dolls."

Dunst's celebrity has

crossed into cyberspace, where she's cult idolized on a profusion of web sites. While most of the surfers profess a "respectful" adulation of the actress, some entrepreneurs have seamlessly composited head shots of Dunst on bodies of porno queens.

"You know what?" says Dunst. "Sometimes my friend advises me to go on certain web sites because they say things that aren't true and everything. My friend really takes it quite personally. She's like, 'I can't believe they said that about you! And blah, blah,

blah!'

"It's so funny. I have America On-Line but I hardly ever go on it. I've been to one of my web sites before and—well, I don't know. It is kind of cool that people construct them for you. In retrospect, it's really an honor to be worthy of this kind of homage."

Dunst appeared to be oblivious to the X-rated confections and, coward that you're truly is, I don't broach the subject. Instead I opt to flip through the script of *CROW III: SALVATION*, which chronicles the dilemma of one Alex Corvis, an innocent man who is falsely convicted of his girlfriend's brutal murder and sentenced to the electric chair. Not long after his execution, Corvis is resurrected into the series' youngest hero. Turning avenger, he's abetted by Erin, his slain girlfriend's younger sister. Dunst relished the role of Corvis' maverick compatriot; in fact, she can barely contain her enthusiasm...

"I get to fry this guy we put in an electric chair!" she squeals. "I get to pull the plug. And I do get an opportunity to brandish a gun. My character is not a girl who just sits there and lets stuff happen to her. She actively tries to get out of whatever she can. I attack people. I don't just sit back and watch. And being a participant, not a spectator, is something I actually liked."

Mahius, who previously performed a myriad of very introspective roles, was also impressed with his equally extroverted character. So did the film's rock 'em, sock 'em viscera appeal to the actor?

"I enjoyed the action scenes," replied Mahius. "And I especially liked one of the first action sequences we shot. Bharat had this moment staged when I come into this den of iniquity, as it were—you know, the money counting room. This movie takes place in a perfect town, just like the one here in Salt Lake

Dunst & Eric Mahius in *CROW III: SALVATION*. "Eric and I had amazing chemistry. Every time I worked with him, it was intense. He expressed so much with his eyes."



City, and underneath there's—as Bharat says—"this underbelly of rottenness that exists." And I'm sort of going into the heart of that rottenness. And when I go into this room, it's like I'm entering Hell.

"During this sequence, I walk into an ambush in this enormous, dark warehouse room, where the bad guys open fire on me. The revenge is just so complete. I fly way up into the rafters. I spear someone with a broken-off pipe, jump down, break the arms of two cops, take their guns, shoot them and end with this Mexican stand-off with ten cops lined up nailing me with everything they've got. Oh—did I mention that I also liked the kissing scenes?"

As Dunst has mentioned during our interview, a love story is laced into all of the film's nihilism. I ask her to pick up where Mabus left off. "So you want to know about my kissing scenes?" she giggles. "You want me to describe it? [sighs]. Well, you see, it was so short for me because...[pauses]. It wasn't a big deal. I mean like it was just...[pauses again, abruptly perks up a heartbeat later]. It was a good kiss, though."

The 5'4" actress has prospered professionally ever since she was afforded substantive screen visibility. Reviewing her performance in *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE*, Roger Ebert noted, "her character is disturbing, trapped in her child's body as she ages, decade after decade. Dunst, perhaps with the help of Stan Winston's subtle makeup, is somehow able to convey the notion of great age inside apparent youth." The movie earned her an MTV Award for "Breakthrough Performance." Flash forward four years to *STRIKE*: Dunst was still collecting sterling reviews. "All I could think of while watching this horrid film was that it is a



Director Neil Jordan (*COMPANY OF WOLVES*) rehearses Dunst on an *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE* set. "I get into heavy duty stuff," notes Dunst.

cross between SWEET VALLEY HIGH and PORKY\*, "fumed Film Com. "The only redeeming part was Kirsten Dunst. This was a waste of her acting ability; her agent should be fired for letting her do the film." Though DICK floundered commercially, the actress tallied more positive press: "Dunst is a sugar-high, paddle board teenage extroversion on a rubber leash whose mini-thoughts come so fast they create a 10-car pileup in her brain," wrote the *San Francisco Examiner*.

Gauged as a youthful icon of her generation, Dunst appeared in the "I Know I Loved You" video for Australian band Savage Garden. Her TV credits include guest shots on THE OUTER LIMITS ("Music of the Spheres" episode), STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION ("Dark Page" episode), TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL, and GUN. Dunst's recurrent role of "Charlene 'Charlie' Chumleigh" on ER earned the thespian

#### KIRSTEN DUNST

**"I think my mother and I are going to start a production company. I want to write my own scripts, too. I want to make sure there's always a good amount of roles for women of all ages."**



7. Dunst in CROW SP. SALVATION. "I hesitated at the script initially. I wanted to work with [director] David Mamet. It was a difficult role: my character, who is lonely, is dealing with her sister's death." (S.A.C. As "Julie" in the 1995 edition JUMANJI ("Don't be fooled, it isn't chance, staying put would be a blunder").



marily to her career. "Well, it is tough to juggle everything," says Dunst. "But I love it so much and I'm not ready to take a break. Not yet. I think that I'm going to do college over the computer because you can do that now. I'm also going to enroll in some writing courses, as well. I don't know yet specifically what I want to study. I haven't decided...[pauses]. I don't know...I don't know...wait, probably...I have no clue. It definitely will not be film or anything like that. But it will definitely be literature or something in that capacity."

"I'd like to continue acting but I'd also like to start up a production company. My mom really wants to produce, too. So I think that we're going to start one together and produce films. Really good films. I really just want to keep on acting and direct someday. I want to write my own scripts, too. I want to make really good roles for women. It's kind of like you have to be a certain age group for the really good roles. It's hard. So I want to make sure there's always a good amount of roles for women of all different ages."

Crow in point: why couldn't the Crow experience a change of gender in the franchise's next movie?

"I don't know if I'll do another Crow film, although I know one is in development," says Dunst. "It would really depend on the script. But I definitely would consider it. I think that they're such cool movies and—yes!—I think that they should make a girl Crow, too. That would be really cool."

Jeff Most, who produced all of the CROW films to date in collaboration with Edward R. Pressman, insists there is a likelihood of a dark, distaff crusader. "In respect to a female Crow, that's actually more fodder for the internet than anything rooted in reality," says Most. "We've always considered a female Crow. But in terms of actually developing that character for the third



a Young Star Artist Award (Best Performance by a Young Actress in a Dramatic TV series).

Press coverage of her societal and dating venues has been limited to sound bites like "she dated Dustin Hoffman's son." During our dialogue, Dunst adheres pri-

installment of *THE CROW*, a female Crow was something we did not, in fact, approach with any vigilance. But we are continually fascinated with the notion of a female Crow. In the future, we may very well do a character, an anthological character, or perhaps a continuing character in one of the *CROW* features that would be a woman."

It turns that I have arrived on the film's final shooting day "Tell your readers that *THE CROW III: SALVATION* is slated for release in the year's first quarter," said an executive en route to the elevator. Dunst vows to pump up the film's promotional vigor: "I think that audiences will love this movie," she concludes. "And that's because, even though it's got the same feel of the other *CROW* movies, it's got a major love story going on beneath it all. I think that everyone will enjoy it, including *CROW* fans and even people who have never seen past films in the series. It takes a step out of the genre. I think *CROW* fans will be very pleased." □

**R** Dorot with Domiziana Giordano in *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE*. **R** As "Andie Mac" in *SNOW DEAD SQUAD*. **GOUS** "She has great poise, wit & great dimples," wrote a *Time* critic.







A woman, Amy Miller, is shown from the waist down, wearing a white loincloth. She is standing in front of a dark, textured background that resembles a cave wall. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the white fabric of the loincloth against the dark background.

Amy Miller, posing  
for 99 photos,  
Dance Palace, is  
the #1 pick of  
Bulldog Root. Cave-  
women created:  
"Amy conveys the  
sensuality & inno-  
cence of my girl...  
she's a star-in for  
a film adaptation."

# CAVEWOMAN

A COMBINATION OF LITTLE ANNIE FANNY, FAY WRAY AND PREHISTORIC PULCHRITUDE, SHE EVOKES A LEGION OF B-MOVIE CAVEWOMEN.

BY SANDI WEISS

Face it, strategy and balls-out action entertainment have been male territory. Exempting an occasional female presence—like Elvira, who debuted a game in 1990, and Lara Bow and Princess Rosella (Sierra heroines developed by Roberta Williams)—video recreation is a patriarchy. Leisure Suit Larry, Tex Murphy, Indiana Jones, Roger Wilco, Duke Nukem, Gabriel Knight, Guybrush Threepwood. But the crossover appeal of Eidos' Lara Croft (aka Tomb Raider) introduced a female-driven franchise to the market.

It's likely that Cave-  
woman is among the catalysts to retire female stereotypes in the comic book medium. Girls are impressed with the title character's intelligence, self-dependence and athletic aptitude. Naturally, guys are enamored with her baby face, voluptuous physique and the cut of her makeshift bikini. But, not unlike most quarters of Lara Croft's

L: It's Regan Welch in ONE MILLION YEARS (L.E.: her striking blues prompted studio: R: "This art was for a trading card," says Frost. "Cabin liked it so much, it became the cover of the 1st issue [2nd series]."



male legion, guys perceive Cavewoman as more than a pinup.

"Our company, Basement Comics—unlike the mainstream industry—is striving to stretch the imagination, not the belly. Cavewoman was inspired by William Stout—one of the leading dino artists, a legend in the comic book business—when he teamed with Bill Elder, the co-creator of *Little Annie Fanny*. I did a two-issue storyline that stretched into three full series. Cavewoman is popular among men who want to save the beautiful woman—and she's popular among women who don't want to be rescued."

**Badt Root**  
Creator of Cavewoman

Cruising to Baltimore's White Marsh mall, I launched a decidedly unscientific poll at Another Universe, retailers of sci-fi merchandise. Approaching some male teenagers shopping around for Lady Death memorabilia, I held up my tape recorder and asked them some questions. Initially reluctant, they finally acquiesced and one of them admitted, "We each buy two comic books a week, though neither of us is an avid reader of a particular brand name."

The other guy piped-in with, "We, and our friends, actually look for a good story. And, yes, that includes female super heroes. Sometimes the sex of the hero is relevant, but an interesting plot and character are much more significant."

As I opened a binder to write some notes, both guys gave me the slip. As customers milled around the counter, I watched as an entire inventory of Headless Horseman three-piece Deluxe box sets (one of McFarlane's SLEEPY HOLLOW tie-ins) sold-out within an hour, ditto all of the Witchblade ("Holiday Sara") Christmas ornaments. As I departed from the premises, my vision locked on three Cavewoman (!) action figures

## B. ROOT, "CAVEWOMAN" CREATOR

**"Our 'Cavewoman' comic book is very popular with all males who want to save the beautiful woman. And the character is also popular with all the women who don't want to be rescued."**



Cadry "The Ping Pong" Linda as Linda in ONE MILLION YEARS, B.C. The 1940 release (4) was Oscar nominated for special effects. Repeat White replicated the cavewoman role 26 years later. A 25-year-old Linda committed suicide in '68.

sealed within plastic bubble enclosures: the only difference between them was the base of each bikini (one of them is the traditional leopard skin print) and bonus dino accessories. Looked to me like Cavewoman cracked the big time.

**Badt Root:** "Avatar Comics, who put out many action figures in the past, approached me about doing the Cavewoman comic book. They told me if I let them publish Cavewoman, they'd put out an action figure, color books and they made many other promises. But I told them that I wasn't interested in publishing the book anywhere but out of the Basement. I previously worked with other companies—let's just say that I didn't like having a car without me being in the driver's seat."

"I did tell Avatar that I'd love to put out an action figure and we negotiated a deal. I was supposed to make 7% on each unit, averaging at least \$7,000. I was told that the Cavewoman toys sold twice as many units as Avatar's previous best seller. But then the



action figure market fell apart and I didn't make any money off that. Every time I make some headway, the market falls apart!

"Basement Comics will premiere two Cavewoman statues on the market in late 2000 or early 2001. And we'd like to develop our own action figures, more anatomically perfect next time, as well as hats, posters...



# BRINKE STEVENS, ACTRESS

**"We were dressed up in little shammy bikinis & hunted down like animals. Cavewomen save the day with big guns. It was fun to be in a bikini in that: it brought out this primitive, raw power."**



**L&C:** Female fatalist Caroline Munro in *AT THE EARTH'S CORE* (TW). "I was used as Caroline's pinup posters on a wall while growing up," says Reet. "She's still a knockout." **R:** A cavewoman fraternity in *THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT*



The timing of *Cavewomen* seemed to be fortuitous. The comic book debuted in 1994, right on the cusp of a "jungle girl" resurgence. Tentatively reprising Irish McCalla's TV role as SHEENA, QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE, Gena Lee Nolin (*BAYWATCH*) was measured for a leincloth in tabloid spreads. Jennifer O'Dell slipped into a prehistoric bikini for *THE LOST WORLD* television series. Even adult films—sample Surrender Cinema's *SHANDRA: THE JUNGLE GIRL*—were tailored to capitalize on the trend. An illustrated Internet serial titled *The Adventures of Jungle Janet*—about a wispy safari siren who perpetually winds-up in a cannibal's stewpot (or, in a bit of role reversal, on a six-foot fish's dinner platter)—quickly developed a cult audience. And Sheena endorsed in a London Night comic book, though she traded-in her trademark bikini for a more chic wardrobe (the worst marketing decision since the invention of *Spiderman* dimes).

**Budd Root:** "In 1993, I left Blockbuster Video to begin my comic book career. Bob Smith, a leading short story writer, saw my portfolio and hired me to illustrate a comic book called *James Gang*. It was poorly promoted and sold under 800 copies, so my visions of conquering the comic world were shattered immediately."

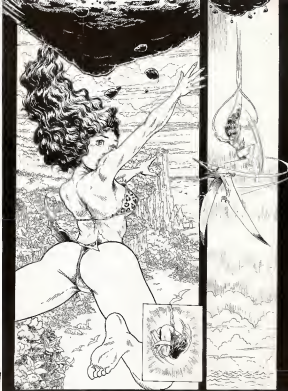
"After that terrible one-shot, Bob Smith decided not to do a follow-up and left me hanging. Feeling terribly defeated, I went to see the premiere of *JURASSIC PARK*. Imaginary thunder claps and lightning galvanized the air as I left the theatre. That evening, my wife and I had a long chat about continuing my comic career. With Little Annie Fanny and the dinosaurs from *JURASSIC PARK* prominently in mind, I began writing and illustrating *Cavewomen*, my first solo ef-

fort.

"I originally had visions of Cavewoman selling 20,000-40,000 copies, so you can imagine my disappointment when the numbers came in at around 4,000. But Diamond's sales rep at the time, Mark Herr, told me those were 'wonderful' numbers for an independent. He said most independents sell well under 2,000 copies. With that in mind, I was mortified when the second issue's numbers were well under 2,000! That one is now declared our rarest issue. Back issues of Cavewoman #1 sell for \$100 so you can imagine the asking price for #2! Anyway, the numbers consecutively rose with each subsequent issue.

"I started getting phone calls from DC editors and professionals. Comic legends like Kari Kessel, Mark Schultz and Chris Claremont began stopping by my table at conventions to give me their kindest regards.

"As far as the renewal of the casegirl/jungle girl trend, the irresistible combination of dinosaurs and prehistoric women just keeps coming back, while daunting boxoffice receipts indicate the public doesn't buy into other comic book spin-offs...they Barb Wire'd out on Pamela Lee's film, snored on BATMAN sequels and didn't show up for THE PHANTOM. But they're hungry for more KENA—a sort of surrogate cave-



Root: "The issue the top illustration is from was done without dialogue, we had no choice with a tight deadline. It's the favorite of many readers." Left: "The cover to the first issue ever. The image was inspired by Bill Seward's Dinosaur Book."

woman—and Disney's animated union of Jane and TARZAN was one of last year's top 10 grossing films. If someone ever adapts Cavewoman into a live-action film, my choice for the title role would be Jennifer Lopez. I originally had Salma Hayek in mind but she's shifted from femme fatale into an indulgence for Hollywood glam."

Though balanced with strong stories, there's a surfeit of jiggle in Cavewoman, considering the brevity of the heroine's bikini. With so much exposure of Cavewoman's double Ds, I wonder if the comic book has provoked the tolerance of censors...

Budd Root: "That's the wonderful thing about doing

an independent book—I answer to my own conscience and the only rules are my rules. But, on the other hand, Cavewoman is inspired by people with class; the comic won't outstep the boundaries set by my heroes and that includes Forrest J Ackerman, Neal Adams, Jack Kirby, John Byrne, Frank Frazetta and my grandfather, who's always



looking over my shoulder. Bottom line, no smut.

"The only time that I stretched the boundaries on nudity was with the mature version of *Jungle Tales*. That was in answer to all the fans who wanted nude commissions—they wanted me to take the loincloth off Meriem [aka Cavewoman] and there's no way I could keep up with the demand. It's the only time that I ever rendered the heroine in the buff. The backlash turned out to be only nominal. I had a couple of comic professionals tell me that, once I'd see the numbers on a 'nude' comic, I'd never draw clothes on Cavewoman again. And one reader, who claimed that I betrayed her innocence with the nudity, vowed never to buy another issue. C'mon! I've seen my wife naked and she's still innocent. I don't think I'd be betraying Cavewoman unless I changed her personal-

#### B. ROOT, "CAVEWOMAN" CREATOR

**"I stretched the boundaries on nudity only with a mature version of 'Jungle Tales.' It's for fans who wanted nude commissions. They wanted me to take to the loincloth off Cavewoman."**



Root notes that Barbara Bach, cast in CAVEWOMAN #15, "played her role as Lulu, a shock up cavewoman, too well. It wasn't until she married co-star Ringo Starr (2) that I forgave her." Bach had already sampled 607 in *SPY WHO LOVED ME*.



ity."

**Disclaimer:** Prior to this assignment, the last time I looked through a comic book was from my top bunk at Timber Ridge Camps. But I'm hooked on Cavewoman. If I can't relate to the heroine physically, I can certainly bond with her on a spiritual level. It's about a self-dependent woman who's surviving

a world just a little more primitive and hostile than Clinton America...

Budd Root: "The central story of Cavewoman involves a little girl-nazi-door, named Meriem Cooper, who makes the papers when she's killed in an explosion at her grandfather's lab—or so the town thought. Actually, a branch of the government's secret service had learned of her grandfather's dabbling with time travel and put an end to it. Years later, after taking over the facility themselves, an accident causes the entire town to go back in time. They learn that Meriem had not only survived the accident, but had survived 13 years of life amongst the prehistoric beasts from 70 million years ago.

"It's the story of Meriem's love for her grandfather, which he reciprocates 11 years after his death. Meriem not only believes he looks after her, she still has conversations with him which help in life-saving decisions.

"It's also the story of a town that had once only worried about taxes, paying bills and keeping meals on the table. Now they worry about seven-ton meat eaters in their backyards and keeping from becoming the meals. They couldn't survive without Meriem's help.

"It's struggling to make the best of an awful situation and the importance of keeping your humanity. All the while, you love Meriem—a blend of Tarzan and THE PERILS OF PAULINE—who helps the town face the ancient, savage forces of nature, where only the strong survive and teamwork can prevail. Throw in a Kong-like gorilla, some chesecake—and a dose of human situation comedy—and you have my Cavewoman.

"The first series dealt with the town's discovery of Meriem's survival, and the dawning of the knowledge that they are the only people on prehistoric terrain that

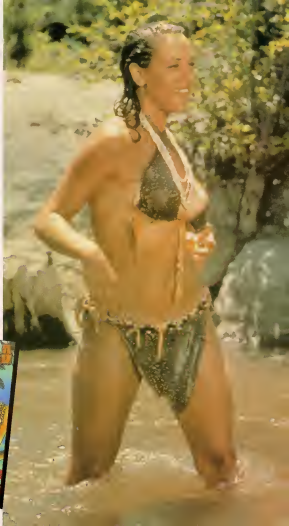


they previously had only read about in books or seen evidence of in museums. In the second series, the town takes a turn for the worse when the prehistoric 'Rainy Season' hits with devastating results.

*"In the upcoming third series, the town has adapted to prehistoric life quite well on the shores of the inland Pangloss Sea." The early issues of the series will focus on Meriem's attempt to bring the town back to the 21st century, her plunge into a nightmare world and we'll have a giant sized tribute issue that honors 'the beast that only beauty could kill' entitled King Klyde, the Age Wonder of the World. Then all hell breaks loose in the issues that wrap up the series.*

Sustaining family tradition, Budd Root routinely pulls up a chair and spins stories for his offspring. He tailored the comic book's "Gramps" character as homage to his own grandfather, the family's pioneering storyteller. "He used to take me out to buy comics," recounts Root. "We'd go to

CINCOBALT ISLAND, featuring B-drive Michelle Bauer (9), premiered the same year that Cavewoman debuted. B: "This art was almost based from Dianna's outburst. It was done to pitch Cavewoman's action figure."



**SAVAGE STRUGGLE!**

**PRIMITIVE  
PASSIONS!**

**DEADLY  
JEALOUSY!**

**PREHISTORIC  
WOMEN**  
*a Cinecolor*

With Joan Lincoln, John H. Wood, Victor Mature, and  
Directed by Arthur Lubin. Screenplay by Sam M. Green and Victor  
Produced by ALBERT S. COHEN. Distributed by COLUMBIA PICTURES  
AN ALLIANCE ARTISTS RELEASE

"PREHISTORIC WOMEN [i]nvokes  
sexy cavegirls who try to find cave-  
hunks. Silly," wrote Leonard Maltin  
about the 1950 film. *Loanette Leno* [i]  
was cast as a model in JUNGLE  
GEMTS, a 1954 Beverly Hills movie.

church on Sundays and, af-  
terwards, we'd go get pizza  
rolls and then stop at this  
little 'five and dime,' one of a  
chain of retail stores they  
had back in the '60s. They  
used to sell comics for ten  
cents apiece, so he'd whip  
out two dollars and I'd come  
home with 30 comics. He  
was great!"

The women in Root's life  
are similarly embodied by  
his comic book characters.  
His mother was the presi-  
dent of N.O.W. (National  
Organization for Women)  
and his wife, Leslie, served  
as his manager. "I like the  
powerful women," explains  
Root. "We're both comfort-  
able with Leslie being the  
smarter one of us. She does  
the bills and she can fix the  
TV. I'm the one who's better

**PREHISTORIC WOMEN**





Circumventing  
stereotype, direc-  
tor Ben Clait pre-  
sented his 1990  
SAVY HALLY  
CUTS from  
screening. "They  
are graceful but  
they can handle  
themselves."



with the kids and can draw it's a 50/50 thing. Together, we really work well. She immediately gave me structure. Not only is she good-looking and just a total blast to be around, she is an inspiration."

Root's female crusaders are resistant to the ice queen demeanor and killer instincts of competitive comic book heroines. Not that they don't get pissed-off once in awhile. "In the *Rain* series, there was a cop, Sergeant Maratone, who is really intimidated by Meriem. He didn't take her seriously at first and she ended up throwing his ass through a window. Most of the men who are in the series, for the final part of her storyline, are very comfortable around Meriem. She doesn't really threaten anyone. She just enjoys being around people again. She's the most popular girl in school, every guy wishes he were her girlfriend."

"Meriem's assertiveness is one of the reasons we have attracted such a wide female readership. Women can empathize with her be-

Root, this is the *Peacemaker* cover featuring Meriem," which hits stores this month, in April. "It's central character, L.B." will get her own comic. B, "I did this to show Meriem is now a savage Cavewoman, but she's so sweet."



cause her psyche is authentically female. My wife totally rewrote the final issue of the 'Rain' series. She'd tip me off that 'A woman wouldn't do that.' Both Annette and Bruce [Meriem's love interest] are trapped in these lower sewers. Annette is this beautiful, blonde woman with whom Bruce had an overnight affair [before Meriem]. They pretty much depended on one another in some terrifying adventures. Then Meriem shows up. When she first comes in, it's completely black down there and there's something in this tidal pool with them. They're hugging each other and Bruce tells Annette, 'It's okay, honey. Don't worry.' And Meriem hears this. My first reaction was Meriem's so confident with herself, she's not the jealous type. And so she just says, 'No sweet. Let me help you guys out of the sewers.' But my wife says, 'Yeah? Bullshit! She would not do that! Here's this half naked woman with Bruce, with no shirt on, caught in the sewers. They're bugging each other, calling each other "honey"!' So, instead, Meriem decks Bruce. It clicks so much better now. You have to keep doing human things to make people be able to relate to her. Nobody can relate to an angel. I didn't want her to be like the TARZAN movies of the '50s, I wanted her to be like the Tarzan novel. He had a very stark personality and you could understand how it developed. I didn't want this grunt, savage Meriem. And yes, you're right, she does get pissed off, just like a little kid. I ripped off a lot of the dialogue from my little girl. Children have a unique way of communicating that's just wonderful."

So why opt for a dutiful, becomy 'Tarzan' over Edgar Rice Burroughs' distinctly male warrior? "Because girls are much more fun to draw than guys," admits

#### MAMIE VAN DOREN

**"As a cavewoman, I was required to only hum and look sexy. They couldn't find seashells big enough to cover my boobs! Director Peter Bogdanovich used a fake name. I don't blame him."**



Enter an age of unknown terrors, pagan worship and virgin sacrifice...

**WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH**  
VICTORIA VETRI  
ROD VINCIGUERRA, KATEY ALLAN, BOB WILSON



Root. "I've also been a big Tarzan fan all my life. One of the wildest things about the Tarzan books was he was always saving some woman. I remember a really interesting predicament with one beautiful, wide-eyed, terrified woman who's surrounded by Cro-Magnon men, lions and crazy, perverted gorillas. C'mon, there was an appeal to that. But since my real mother was the President of the N.O.W. organization up in Massachusetts; I had that in the back of my mind, too. So if I made my Tarzan character a woman, then I could put her in all these situations that I found so fascinating—however, she would be the



**WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH** offered Victoria Vetri (center) as Tarzan. Her dialogue was an off-repeated one-liner ("Aaaaah"), L. Vest with co-stars Patrick Allen & Bill Corbellino.

Tarzan character. It all comes down to the kind of people I really admire."

Root's uphanging extends an appreciation for people in general, not genders. "I like a guy who can almost be in any kind of situation and make light of it. There are guys who have been working at a certain job for years, who dutifully show up at the office just so



"My fave cover was for a book showcasing Kyda's perils," says Reel. In-jokes from KING KONG, Reel's favorite film of all, are scattered in the comic. L: Keag strips Play Way in a scene cut from the film's TV and 1982 reissued release.



they can collect their paychecks. And then there are guys like Cavewoman's Professor Cook, who just takes total fascination in every single little discovery. Those are the kind of guys and the kind of women I like. He knows what he likes, goes with the flow and he lives by the moment. The kind of women I like are a little smarter than that but they

enjoy themselves along the way, too."

When the entire town of Marshville is transported back in time, Meriem is provided with her first human contact since the death of her grandfather. Which of civilization's comforts did she miss the most? "Movies, ice cream, and McDonalds," Meriem replies. The fast food deficiency is not the on-

ly plausible situation encountered by her environment's new inhabitants. Issues concerning peer acceptance, domestic abuse, depression and alcoholism are addressed and dealt with in plot-driven scenarios that deflect squalid scrutiny.

Some torrid Cavewoman renderings, accessible on the comic book's website, prompted Reel to recapitulate Meriem's occasional proclivity for wearing only her tan lines. "I had put out a glamour portfolio first," he shares. "I only printed up 150 of them and they sold out really quick. A lot of people wanted those pieces, and I just didn't want to do it again. I printed the whole thing up myself. And I've got this fear of becoming a 'nudie' artist. If you become a nudie artist, nobody's going to read the stories—they're just gonna flip through the pages. Then I did a 'mature version' of that issue. I told you about I hiked up the price to like \$6.95 and hoped that it would be accepted, and hoped I'd still be able to go back to doing the story lines. Hopefully, comic readers won't expect nudity in order for them to bring my girl home with them. As it is, it didn't sell well at all. I don't know what the reasoning behind that was. It could have been the high price. Part of me was disappointed and part of me was happy. I got so many requests that I hoped that this would be a really big



seller. It didn't make any money, so that solved itself."

Mike Hoffman (creator of *Tigress*) told me that I turned traitor on that one and I shouldn't have done it, because everybody saw Meriem as a girl-next-door. I don't understand exactly why. If somebody finds a naked picture of the girl-next-door posted on the Internet, she's still the girl-next-door."

Meriem's effortlessly lustrous nature isn't a cue for a Yahha-Dabba-Do-Me spread. She's rendered into a wholesome hybridization of Virginia pin-up, pulp pulchritude, Will Elder homage, Virgil Finlay lampoon and Betty Cooper (yeah, Archie Comics). "I didn't want to do the sultry poses and all the rest of that," says Root. "I wanted to have it more like if you were very intimate with someone, and you were just like out on the beach playing around...I wanted to communicate that with the portfolio pieces in particular. If you were out with your girlfriend or wife, and you were getting playful and want to take some shots, you might just do some goofy things. I doubt every shot would be 'I'm sensual.' She crosses her eyes and makes a face—that is the ambience that I wanted."

But the girl-next-door is a composite of real-life sexpots, including a few who have than broughed the adult industry: "Meriem's face is Little Anne Fanny—I never looked at the pictures of *Playboy* nearly as much as I looked at the comic strip in the back. Meriem's breasts are a woman named Danna Ashe, one of the more respectable pinup queens and she is all natural. Her lower torso is Nina Hartley. She is a combination of all the best. Her soul pretty much developed as I came across what happened to her life. I wanted her to be somebody who was always a 'live by the moment' type of person."

Root's *Cavewoman* stories are none too subtly peppered

# B. ROOT, "CAVEWOMAN" CREATOR

**"Cavewoman's assertiveness is one reason we've expanded our female readership. My wife totally rewrote an issue in the series, insisting that 'A woman wouldn't [or would] do that.'"**



Root: "Top is from *Cavewoman* #4. On the cover (rs), Kylie is bench pressing Meriem (aka Cavewoman)." B: "This is my favorite photo on Earth. It's me and Sara Karloff at Monster Rally. She was very close to her father, Boris Karloff."



with in-joke allusions to KING KONG ("It's #1 on every movie list"); characters include Fay and Ray (a venerable tip-of-the-hat to the film's leading lady, Fay Wray), Francis Reicher (the actor who performed as the film's "Captain Englishman"), Bruce Cabot (who played bunky "Jack Driscoll"), et al. Meriem Cooper, the Cavewoman, was named in deference to KONG's co-director and co-writer, Merian C. Cooper. "I love Fay Wray," gushes Root, "and she's still amazing. She's writing plays in New York City. She turned down the role played by Gloria Stuart in *TYTANIC* because she had a play to write. She doesn't regret it, either. She feels totally fulfilled and satisfied with her life. She had priorities with her 'kids'—the performers in the play—and I really admire that. I admired her before that."

## Comely Cavewomen of the Cinema

"I really, really liked DI-



NOSAUR ISLAND," grins Root, "and not because of the dinosaurs—they kind of cracked me up—but because of the girls. But I wouldn't have wanted to watch it with my mom in the room."

DINOSAUR ISLAND (94) and DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS (96) are t&ns laden, low-budget burlesques of formulaic '50s B-films: modern, randy males (usu-

ally G.I.s)—who accidentally wind-up in the prehistoric era—crash a matriarchal colony (a beautiful, perhaps asphyx sovereign loses control over her dominion of bikini-clad airheads “who have never seen a man before!”). This same chestnut was occasionally transplanted to sci-fi films (QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE and ABOTT AND COSTELLO GO TO MARS among them).

DINOSAUR ISLAND, directed by B-movie veterans Fred Olen Ray and Jim Wynorski, opens with a small plane of military drops crash-landing on an isle of gorgonous babes who, somehow surviving the Stone Age, show a lot more tan than discretion. I asked Jim Wynorski to summarize why he and his collaborator dusted-off

It: Julie Ege navigates a cove of cave babes (2) in CREATURES THE WORLD FORGOT! The film topped last fall's Turner Classic Movie channel in a string of horror pic & sex fests



such an antiquated plot.

“To make money and have a good time,” he shrugged. “It was just a way to capitalize on JURASSIC PARK, which had been released a few months earlier.”

Fred Olen Ray provided me with a bit more insight: “The women who’ve starred in most fantasy films were willing flowers. They were just window dressing. But

#### MICHELLE DAUER, ACTRESS

**“I’ve always been the seductress, just lots of sex scenes! So they cast me in this cavewoman film as a virgin. I thought I’d be struck by lightning! After that, I tried to avoid [T&A] roles.”**



there were a handful of movies where women were more in control—they were stronger, and so they dominated the films that they were in. The women in DINOSAUR ISLAND wield that kind of influence. The guys in the film were depicted as such losers because we didn’t want the island women to have any real competition. We figured out that teenage kids watching this movie couldn’t relate to big, burly guys who were stronger and tougher than them, it wouldn’t really be much of a male fantasy.

“The idea is for a bunch of guys, who would never be successful any other time in their lives, get stranded on an island of women. The only way that an island’s singular tribe could exist as all-female is if their the male males had gotten themselves killed in the day-to-day rigors of staying alive. The women learned to take care of themselves by functioning in roles formerly occupied by men. Part of the humor is that these feisty girls are actually looking up at these guys—these weaklings—as if they can go in and do something that the girls haven’t been able to do yet.”

I note that Queen Morganna (Toni Naples) facetiously trivializes the cast-aways as “more men.”

“The queen is just very distrustful of guys,” Ray explains. “She really thinks they are just nothing but trouble. If you look at almost all the early films that I’ve made, they never write-off women as victims. The ladies are in charge, never wallflowers or waiting... none of these films, in fact, really have male heroes. You get a certain type of movie that attracts a certain type of person, like where you have a kind of he-man guy and the girl who is always pleading for the killer not to murder her. That appeals to a certain group, but I think that there is a whole group of people that can’t identify with the big, burly hero guy. They relate much better

with films where guys don't have a lot to do with how things turn out, and where women are very strong. And I definitely think there's a male fantasy about strong-willed women who can take charge and make things happen. I guess it shows in my work.

"I can't stand scenes where women are pleading for their lives. It's just awful. I just don't find that entertaining. Instead of being vulnerable, I think everybody needs to take action; even if you don't succeed, you have to do something. Since I've been able to call the shots most of the time in my own career, I haven't had to do films that appeal to misogynists."

Michelle Bauer is no stranger to the genre, what with "cavewoman" roles in **DINOSAUR ISLAND** (as swinging June) and **PHANTOM EMPIRE** (the "cave bunny"). She also played a minor role in **CAVE GIRL** ('85) as a "locker room student."

"But I've got to level with you, Michelle," yours truly

continues on page 24

Repeating Sybil Danning's pimp pants, Ann Cadell does protective threads for her own cheesecake. R: "I rushed this cover for a deadline," says Root. "I don't like it. It's more like *Mind Nurse* than *Cavewoman*."









"I love to pose as  
a courtesan,"  
says model Gisele  
Büchler. "Be-  
cause I view sex  
as a business.  
Queen Paganini took  
this shot of me.  
The lights were so  
hot, they set off  
the fire alarm."



confessed to the actress. "I haven't seen your performance as a 'cavegirl' in ONE MILLION HEELS B.C."

"That's okay, I didn't see it, either," a vivacious Bauer grins. "As far as the women taking the upper hand role in DINOSAUR ISLAND, I think that Fred and Jim were looking for every man's fantasy. I think they were looking for the men to come on an island full of women, as yet here the women were still naïve in some ways. Hey, isn't that every guy's fantasy?"

Bauer's character, in fact, chastises the queen for her anti-male inclinations: "How the men were going to have their lives saved was to prove to the queen that they could, in fact, save the village by capturing The Great One [a tyrannosaurus rex that ritually eats virgin sacrifices]. If the guys failed in this mission, they'd face certain execution. So, naturally, the guys and the girls all start mating, falling for each other and combining forces to defeat The Great One."

The dispute between

Rain: I did the art on the left exclusively for Fanny Feline. They insisted I show her novel. It turned out so well that we used it for our web page. It's "I really wanted this cover art to look like a movie poster."



Bauer's heroine and the queen is resolved in an effectively choreographed fight scene. "Tom Naples was so great to work with," declares Bauer. "We pulled hair, dragged each other around and she was right there in your face! It worked out so well. When I first saw it, I went, 'That's bitchin!' It put a lot of the power between the women, too. This is how they settled things, a lot like the men did. They just got out and went for it."

The irony is that former fetish model Bauer, whose flawless comic timing and clothes dispensings have galvanized B-films since the mid-80s, was cast in *DINOSAUR ISLAND* as a virgin. "It was my first time in that role," she laughs. "I was sure I was going to be struck by lightning. I've always been the seductress. I've always played the bad person. It's always been just a lot of sex! And this was one of the roles that Fred gave me that I really didn't have to [Bauer is an indispensable player to the Ray repertory, what with *EVIL TOONS*, *BIKINI DRIVE-IN*, *HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW HOOKERS*, et al.]. It was really refreshing for me. And from there, I really tried to make the transition into not doing just the love scenes and things like that."

"So how did the *DINOSAUR ISLAND* role differ from your other performances as cavewomen?" I inquire.

"Well, *PHANTOM EMPIRE* proved very difficult for me," replies Bauer. "It was one of my first union films, so I didn't have any lines. I played this cavewoman. Here I am, topless during the movie and not speaking. There's your typical T&A, cavewoman-type film!"

E! Cinema's *DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS* is directed by Donald F. Glut, a writer whose exhaustive film research has literally produced volumes of genre-related data (*The Frankenstein Catalog*, *The Dracula Book*, et al.). This time around, a beefy actor travels

#### B. ROOT, "CAVEWOMAN" CREATOR

**"My favorite is Victoria Vetri's cavewoman in *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH*. She's sexy & self-sufficient. In contrast, *ONE MILLION YEARS, B.C.* was simply Raquel Welch dodging dinosaurs."**



to the prehistoric era via a wish-fulfilling artifact. Desperately seeking solace from parasitic starlets, he turns to femmes who are separated from the film industry by millions of years. "Unlike yesteryear's Hollywood stereotypes, none of the cavewomen in my film scream," says Glut. "A couple of the actresses asked me, 'Should we scream when we see the dinosaurs?' And I said, 'No, nobody screams in this movie.' I told them, 'You are not smooth, rounded men. You are playing women who have to be sexy and feminine at all times.' So they never lose what guys perceive as femininity. They are always graceful, but they can really handle their own. I thought that would also enhance their overall appeal."

"I made a conscious effort that they would not, as in many other prehistoric-type movies over the years, come off looking like strippers or hookers. To me, the women in

L. Colina Kening, in the '67 version of *PREHISTORIC WOMEN*, catches some vet Marlyn Burwick. O "The most outrageous film for me is Herzog's *NOFRETETE*," says Burwick



a lot of the jungle exploitation movies—especially the ones produced during the 1950's, what with *PREHISTORIC WOMEN*, *UNTAMED MISTRESS* and *UNTAMED WOMEN*—come off looking like ex-strippers. I wanted them to have a wholesome appeal, like you wouldn't mind bringing them home for an introduction to your family."

But why would an esteemed film archivist opt to make a slapstick movie—replete with scatological gags—about cavewomen? “We wanted to do something that would be a stopping stone, almost as a calling card, to lead to bigger and better things,” says Glut. “My role models were Sam Raimi, writer and director of *THE EVIL DEAD*, and George Romero, writer and director of *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*. You see, those movies were very inexpensive, but were done with a lot of passion and a lot of love—and those movies led to much bigger things. That was pretty much our attitude.”

I query if cavewomen of cinema past may have influenced the conceptualization of the dinosaur valley girls. “That character of Leona, as portrayed by Carol Landis [*ONE MILLION B.C.*, 1966] and then later by Raquel Welch [*ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.*, 1966], was the strongest influence that I had in the portrayal of my movie’s cavewomen, not on-



ly in their characterizations, but in the whole acting style. Both male and female cave people in *DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS* spoke an artificial language that I made up, just like they made up an artificial language in *ONE MILLION B.C.* They compensated for the lack of words with body language, gestures...It was ‘silent movie’-type acting.”

Glut’s cavewoman iconography was also inspired by *CAVE GIRL*, *CREATURES*

DONALD F. GLUT, DIRECTOR

44) made a conscious effort that my cavegirls, unlike those in jungle exploitation films of the '50s, would not come off looking like strippers. I preferred them to have a wholesome appeal.”



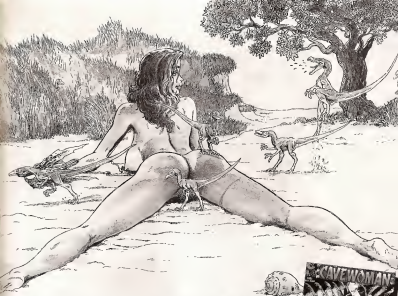
The *WILD WOMEN OF WONGO* (1966) is a '60s cheese shot in color (typical dialogue: "That one's mine. He's cute"). Top left: Prehistoric promoters live by the rule of the jungle. A. American International Santa Ginger recalls *WHEN WOMEN HAD TAILS*. The '70 film spawned a sequel, *WHEN WOMEN LOST THEIR TAILS*.



THE WORLD FORGOT, THE LOST WORLD (1960 version) and *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH*. “The women in those movies were very dynamic, very sexy and very feminine.” The filmmaker had intended the prehistoric wardrobe to be stylistically patterned after the outfits in *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH*. “But that didn’t translate into what we got,” he admits. “*CAVEMAN* [’81] was also an influence in that you had two cavewomen in that film who they were very different from each other. You had Barbara Bach who was kind of snotty and kind of stuck up, and kind of pushy. And then you had Shelley Long, who was very soft and shy. And yet they were both strong characters. I think that, in part, had an influence on the fact that I had a whole tribe of these cavewomen, and each was the same in that they looked good...but each one had one specific standout personality trait.”

*SLAVE GIRLS FROM BEYOND INFINITY*, the umpteenth adaptation of Richard Connell’s story, *The Most Dangerous Game*, transplanted the traditional tropical locale to a planet in a distant galaxy. Cindy Beal, Elisabeth Kaitan and Brinke Stevens portrayed the title characters, each the quarry of a human predator. The sci-fi periphery notwithstanding, the choice of female attire was decidedly cavewoman. “The girls were stranded on a jungle planet,” recalls Stevens. “Our host, in the film, had dressed us up in little shammy cloth bikinis and then hunted us down like animals. In that one, I won’t say the women were really empowered, but eventually the two other characters—played by Liz and Cindy—turn the tables on their attacker. Cavewomen with big guns save the day but not before my demise, unfortunately.”

“The hardest part was running through the jungle barefoot and thinking, ‘Ded-



Rock: "This shot predicted the opening scene of Spielberg's *LOST WORLD*. I love Cavewoman's butt." R: "The cover of *El* has her lifting an alligator, a salt water dino. This was my last start story, I a my art upon the story since dialogue."

n't cave people have clip-pers of some kind?" It was fun to be in a bikini like that. It brings out a primitive, raw power when you are in it. It reminds me of the Raquel Welch movie. And it was an image that lingered in everyone's consciousness."

Cast as a curvy cave babe in 1968's *VOYAGE TO THE PLANET OF PREHISTORIC WOMEN*, drive-in diva Mamie Van Doren (*GIRLS TOWN*, *SEX KITTENS GO TO COLLEGE*) recalls that she "received a script without dialogue. All that I was required to do was hum and look sexy. We were some species of fish women and they couldn't get sea shells that were big enough to cover my boobs! Frankly, I didn't have any fun because the

cast was all female—not a single caveman in sight, just sexy starlets! And the director, Peter Bogdanovich, wanted me to bite the head off of a fish. I said, 'No way! Peter went on to direct films like *THE LAST PICTURE SHOW*, *TARGETS* and *WHAT'S UP DOC?* I don't think he wanted his name linked to *VOYAGE/PREHISTORIC WOMEN*. And I don't blame him. No 'empowerment story' here, we really had one helluva time!"

I offer the last word to the creator of *Cavewoman*. "My favorite of all time, within the movie medium, is Victoria Vetri's cavewoman in *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH*," says Budd Rost. "Victoria was a *Playboy* centerfold [September, '67], she

posed under the name Angela Dorian. My second favorite cavewoman, Raquel Welch, was just too perfect. Victoria, however, knew how to draw those primitive impulses—the caveman in all of us—from male audiences. She had a feminine appeal that, though she was very self-sufficient, incited one to help her. In that sense, she's just like Meriem...though Meriem has bouncier boobs. The film focused on Victoria's physique and her personality. But, in contrast, *ONE MILLION YEARS, B.C.* was simply all about Raquel Welch and John Richardson running from dinosaurs."

[Vetri recalls her audition. "I was obligated to Warner Brothers at the time and Francis Ford Coppola



did a test of me running through the back lot with a tiger bikini on, panting and flaring my nostrils. The film was six months of work."

"A classical cavewoman is one who is strong, beautiful in a natural way, alluring and bigger than life," continues Rost. "But she's also a girl-next-door who's accessible to the average guy. Just like Meriem." □

# PERSEPHONE VAMPIRE FETISHIST

THE FETISH MODEL, AND SELF-PROFESSED "SENSUAL VAMPIRE," PROBES INTO FEMMES FATALES & THE INTERNET'S "DARK SIDE."

By JAMES URSINI

Vampire literature and film has always been a fertile subject for psychosexual analysis. With its emphasis on erotic/symbolic dream imagery (nocturnal emissions in the form of blood, Oedipal fantasies of the destructive parent/vampire returning from the grave, etc.)—not to mention a surfeit of fetishistic/sadomasochistic fantasies, and psychic domination of the victim by its master/mistress—the vampire genre has joined hands with the "taboo and the tainted," to quote the Freud.

Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* introduced the bourgeois reading public to the genre's inherent fetishism and sado-masochism. Her detailed and loving descriptions of varied milieus—as well as the intricate costuming of her vaguely bisexual male vampires—resonate with a fetishistic attention to detail. Further, the psycho-sexual relations between her vampires and their victims seem to be drawn entirely from pioneering studies by Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis. One need only look at Neil Jordan's fine film adaptation of Rice's *Interview With The Vampire* to perceive the bond between fetishism/sadomasochism and the vampire myth: the love/hate relationship between Louis and Lestat and their oscillating shift of power, pedophilia revolving around the "chad" vampire, Claudia, the mixture of blood and sex in the predatory



Persephone, Morgan & Fetish model, as her FLAM model, Vampire "The sensual vampire & feed on the energies of those around me whenever I shoot."

act of the vampires; the loving close-ups and pans across the Victorian-Edwardian decor and costumes; and finally the proliferation of religious objects like crosses and holy water.

As noted earlier, this perverse ethos is not, of course, confined to Anne Rice. It permeates all vampire literature and media, even spreading to the violent world of mainstream computer games with the introduction of *Vampire: the Masquerade*. This new PC game is based upon the popular role-play game books published by White Wolf. These books construct a universe of vampires who are organized into warring clans. It's incumbent upon each player to further develop his/her character with a detailed history and a choice of costumes and weapons. Lick some time into the role-play profiles in vampire Internet chat rooms, based

upon the White Wolf books, and you'll see how serious these players are in their devotion to creating an imposing physical persona.

Vampirism, fetishism, and S&M have also penetrated the world of music in the form of black/death metal. Bands like English group Cradle of Filth and the Norwegian Emperor sport vampiric garb, tattoos, piercings and deathlike makeup reminiscent of the groundbreaking English band, The Cure, but these bands are much more hardcore in their lyrics and performances. Like American rocker Mani-

lyn Manos, they introduce gender-bending costumes and sadomasochistic rituals and lyrics, all of which invoke kinky sex as well as vampire imagery. Among the most dynamic yet mellow of these bands is Alucard, an American group. Fronted by Azra Modest—a cross between Theda Bara and Barbara Steele, who rises from her coffin onstage—the group invokes decadent poets like Baudelaire, while flirting with violent images drawn from the movies of Lucio Fulci.

Bram Stoker created Dracula out of the Eastern European vampire myths alternately promulgated and repressed by the schizophrenic Catholic Church, which could never decide whether to condemn the belief in vampirism or support it. But whatever the official position of the Church, its own rituals gave fuel to the fire of the vam-



7. A gaudy Persephone vamps a victim in a proposed film (Full Moon?) project. 8. The model as comic book icon, Vampira. "I think vampirism & fetishism/sadomasochism are closely tied by their sexuality."

pire mythology: the collection and worship of relics of dead saints, the extensive costuming utilized in church rituals, the adoration of religious objects. Particularly relevant is the ritual of the mass where the faithful, in subjugation to Christ, consume his body and blood in the form of wafers and wine.

Fetish diva Persephone has spent the last five years posing for sexually eccentric magazines and videos. From an early age, she has consciously modeled herself after her childhood heroines—actress/hoiotea Elvira, Ed Wood ensemble player Vampira, comic book character Vampirella—all of whom hybridize the dominatrix image with vampire-related makeup, costuming, and attitude. "I always loved the sarcasm and tongue-in-cheek sexuality that Elvira had. Vampira was a whole other thing to me. Where Elvira was a cartoon, Vampira was more like a raw, feral beast to me with her stern look, severe waist, her nails and eyebrows.

"I am a sort of sensual vampire and feed on the energies of those around me when I shoot. I think vampirism and fetishism/sadomasochism are closely tied by their sexuality in a non-traditional form."

**LATEX LUST** (1998), directed by photographer Patrick Barnes, combines a story of lesbian vampire seduction with latex costumes and touches of sadistic power play between the two female characters. It's been broadcast on the Playboy channel and launched a buzz on vampire websites. "I just think there was a certain chemistry between myself and Molly, the other actress," says Persephone. "We have



## PERSEPHONE

**"I love Elvira's sarcasm and tongue-in-cheek sexuality. But Vampira was more a raw, feral beast."**

worked together a lot."

Raised in a strictly religious household in the heart of conservative Orange County, California, Persephone declares that vampires "derive pleasure from draining their victims, not having intercourse, usually. Fetishists derive sexual pleasure from enhancing their bodies with outfits, tattoos, piercings and by worshipping articles of clothing or body parts. Neither find traditional sexual outlets.

"Children always crave the forbidden. Dracula was always killed by a cross of light. I was intrigued by the powerful figure of Christopher Lee as Dracula since I was five. He was my first crush. I was brought up to believe evil was everywhere, but evil in the person of actors like Christopher Lee aroused me. I was also aroused by the sight of robes and crucifixes."

Persephone has spent the last five years collecting dozens of costumes to embellish her persona. She owns one hundred pairs of high heels, ranging from five to an astronomical 11 inches. "Goth and punk fashions, you know, originated from S&M and fetish. People like Vivienne Westwood began styling punks in the seventies and that created a whole subculture. And now vampire films like **INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE** are drawing from goth and punk for their inspiration. It's all connected.

"I love horror and vampires. I try to incorporate it into my performance art at clubs. My first exposure was through KMBX in Los Angeles, the Spanish station. I also watched a lot of movies about Santo [the Mexican wrestler who fought vampires and classic monsters]. I loved 'em, still do."

Realizing that the Internet is the information medium of the future, Persephone has organized a website ([www.gothic.net/~frames/index.html](http://www.gothic.net/~frames/index.html)) loaded with hundreds of photos, poetry and horror film reviews. She has researched cyberspace to contact practitioners of her fetishism. In fact, the Internet may be the most extensive source of information on taboo subjects. It's a literal and figurative gateway to the dark side. □

# AALIYAH • JET LI ROMEO MUST DIE

THE SINGER, MAKING HER FILM DEBUT, & HONG KONG'S SUPER-STAR DISCUSS THEIR LIAISON IN AN ACTION-PACKED THRILLER.

BY CRAIG REID

Every time I visit a movie set, I recall the words of famous Chinese director David Ting, for whom I performed kung fu routines in films that were cranked-out on Taiwan. Twenty people were stuffed in a small army truck—no suspension, no shock absorbers—which made the ascent up into the desolate mountains outside of Taipei, to our movie locale. It was 100 degrees outside, 100% humidity, no one had showered. Offering solace, Ting casually leaned over to me and said, in broken English, "Adventure, adventure!" Keep this in mind, I'll eventually get to the point.

Flash forward to this very early morning at LAX. I think I've got plenty of time to catch my flight to the crackerbarrel capital of Canada. Scheduled to interview Aaliyah on the set of *ROMEO MUST DIE*, my eyes no sooner lock on the hip-hop artist's resume when an agent blurts-out, "Anyone leaving on the six a.m. flight for Vancouver must be at the boarding gate in 10 minutes to catch the bus to the plane." Bus? What bus? Next thing you know, I'm scrambling through the airport as a daff woman yells, "It's too late, you won't make it—take the next flight!" After racing a two-minute mile, I arrive at the gate asking the lady to hold the bus while I get my



"I stole the show," says Aaliyah. "I was excited to work with Jet Li. I just fell in love with him. He doesn't have to say a word because he has a presence."

boarding pass. "I can't do that," she snottily retorts. However, some sharp guy had radiced the desk about my impending arrival and had my boarding pass ready. I politely barge past the overweight ticket lady, sprint down the staircase and, just as the back bus entrance was closing, I jammed my body between the doors causing the vehicle to brake and the doors to smack back open. I made it.

So now, while squeezed in a center seat for 40 minutes—still waiting for the damn plane to take off—director Ting's words ominously loom in my

mind. "Adventure, adventure..."

Three amuseous hours later, I'm staring out the window and see the magnificent Fraser River completely ransacked by gigantic log booms. Hundreds of thousands of floating logs are jamming the river, eroding the blue surface into an ochreamental brown hue (this is my cue to talk about the in-flight food but this article's opening Richard Ting story cancelled it out—that vignette went on a lot longer than I expected and I'm saddled with only four pages here). Customs was a breeze, so now I'm looking for my ride to set.

Two hours later, I was still waiting for my ride to the set. A few phone calls later, my name was announced over the loudspeaker to pick up a courtesy phone. I learn that the Canadian crew—as a result of a technological snafu—somehow neglected my arrival and asked me if I could find my own way to the set. I hop into a taxi and, for an entire hour, listen to the musings of the driver who reminded me of a bad stand-up impersonation of Fisher Stevens. Arriving on the set, I gracefully accept the apologies of staffers and am guided to a soundproof facility. I'm finally introduced to the alabaster Aaliyah (pronounced Ah-yah) who, although she has wrapped her role, made a special trip to the sound





**ROMEO IS DEAD:** "I play Trish O'Day," says Aaliyah. "She's funky, smart & tough. I relate to her because we do share similarities. She takes nothing from nobody. Did I mention that she falls in love with Jet Li?"

#### stage to greet *Femme Fatales*

"I was born in Brooklyn in 1979," she recounts. "And then I grew up in Detroit, where I graduated from the High School for the Fine and Performing Arts. Singing is my first love, but acting is something that I've always wanted to do. I have actually done a little acting in the past so I guess, in a way, it's good to be back."

And, yes, her real name is Aaliyah. "My mother wanted to give my brother and me names with meaning," the fledgling actress recalls. "And my name has such a beautiful and powerful meaning, it translates as 'the highest meaning office from Tibet,' that now she wants me to just use only the first name. Though it's Islamic, I'm a Catholic."

Personally, I'm impressed with Aaliyah's decidedly grownup demeanor. Barely out of high school, she hasn't really sampled an average adolescence. She has, however, experienced a burgeoning career as a singer. At the age of 14, she cut her first album "Age Ain't Nothing but a Number," which not only turned platinum but spawned two gold singles and a sold-out tour. Her second album, "One

in a Million," which followed in 1996, also went platinum and included a hit single, "If Your Girl Only Knew." Her single from the DR. DOOLITTLE soundtrack, "Are You That Somebody?," shot to #1 on the Billboard charts. Though very amiable, Aaliyah cautiously monitors her own conversation, retreating from revelatory information about her background and childhood. But, discussing her film debut in *ROMEO MUST DIE*, the teen's enthusiasm is genuinely unbridled.

"I play Trish O'Day, a good Irish name for an African-American," she relates. "Trish is a funky tough girl, daughter of the head of this black crime family. She doesn't approve of her father's lifestyle, and she separates herself from that gangster kind of life. She's also trying to start her own life and open up a little store. She's the kind of lady who takes kids to the park for ice cream, a good girl, but then there is that side where she's a no nonsense girl who takes nothing from nobody. She's not loco, she gets shot and gets into fights. I relate to her because I think we have some similarities—the fact that she is no nonsense, she is going to get what she wants,



she's a sweet girl and she's tough.

"And oh—did I mention that my character falls in love with Jet Li?" Aaliyah sighs, blinking her eyes. "That's right, she falls in love with him as the relationship progresses in the film."

I interject that Li, in all of his 30 odd films, has never kissed the girl. "Oh, I know," she grins. "He told me that. So now you have to come to the movie to see if he does."

"But, this being my first real acting job, I've got to say that it's going great! It's really wonderful, what with a



Aaliyah at the Soul Train music awards (left); Jet Li: "People know me as an actor directly & I've an image to uphold. For my first film role, I wanted to take something closer to the Aaliyah everyone knows."

great cast and it's a calm, cool set—and there is Jet!"

Cast as vile Wuh Sing Ku, Hong Kong superstar Jet Li stole *LETHAL WEAPON 4*, produced for \$140 million, from its steller cast. But prior to developing U.S. celebrity, Li applied his martial arts training to his native product—*DRAGONS OF THE ORIENT*, *ADVENTURE KING*, *KUNG FU MASTER*, *FISTS OF LEGEND*—all of which were saddled with budgetary constraints. Living and working as a

fight choreographer in Chinese films, Li was prepared to rap with the actor in Mandarin. After a handshake, I figured that I'd break the ice with, "Jin yang, jiu yang" (a respectful way of saying, "I've heard of you"). Li's eyebrows knitted into a frown of discontent. Uh-oh.

When Li made his film debut in *SHAO LIN SHI* (*SHAOLIN TEMPLE*, 1989), mainland China had abandoned the kung fu genre after the cultural revolution converted the country to

Communism. At that time, he was Li Lian Jie, China's national wu sha champion. So why was he christened Jet Li?

"Well, Li is my family name," he gently replies. "I first shot a movie in Hong Kong [he was cast as real-life hero Huang Fei Hung in *QUICK*, aka *ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA*]. Afterwards, I first saw the movie in the Philippines. They have this poster and people say my name is too long. 'So use shorter name,' they say. Plus, my first movie was very exciting in all of Asia: it was the #1 action movie. Many people say, 'Hman, this guy look like a jet engine [Li throws a rapid fire series of punches, replete with sound effects]—too fast. So it becomes Jet.'"

The film that launched Li's career was *SWORDSMAN II* (1990), a fast-Asia action film directed by Chung Shu Tung. This movie is a vision of viscera: montages of killer bees, swarming scorpions and writhing snakes are blended with gut-wrenching images of bodies ripped apart and imploding heads. The action is high flying, death defying and gravity-cheating. Nearly a decade later, *ROMEO MUST DIE* offers Li the opportunity to expend his acting muscle as well as his athletic aptitude.

Cast opposite Aaliyah, Li plays Han Sing. Though they've been geographically separated, the couple have a lot in common. Han has paid heavily for his loyalty to brother Po, their rapport cost him a career as a Hong Kong policeman and prompted his jail sentence. Po's premature demise induces Han to break out of jail and avenge his sibling's death. The task will exhaust Han's mental discipline and combative skills; he's abetted by unlikely ally Trish, the rebellious offspring of an underworld monarch. The final struggle is not about revenge but circumventing the anarchy before Trish's compatriots—including Han—suffer the consequences.

Li is elated that, this time around, he's the crossing good guy. "Yes," he nods approvingly. "Ah, so you know then that in my movies I usually play the hero. In *LETHAL WEAPON 4*, [director] Dick Donner says my smile is cute but then I can change my face [shifts into a scowl] to be very cruel and dangerous, so I was the bad guy in the movie. But my character you play—good or bad—they always think they are doing the right way. So I always think I am playing the good guy [coily smiles]. So now I'm the good guy."

"As you know, action in Hong Kong is much faster. But the biggest difference to me between here and Hong

Kong films is the language. And the budget in Hong Kong is much smaller, plus we work harder, long days—well over 12 hours a day and no weekends off.

"I need to bring my crew from Hong Kong to design action. In ROMEO IS DEAD, all the martial art fights are different from American fighting style. I brought in famous action director Yuen Kwai (he supervised six of Li's previous films, including MY FATHER IS A HERO, FIST OF LEGEND and LETHAL WEAPON 4). We did the fight and showed the director [Andrzej Barakowski]. He liked it, we film and use. Action must help the character. In Hong Kong, many times action is first, but here it is important for character."

Li admits that he uses stunt doubles for his films: "Since I was eight years old, I studied martial arts. Eight hours a day, six days a week for 18 years. People know Jet Li is a martial artist and I do martial arts in my films. But I wasn't trained to jump off buildings and that sort of stuntman stuff. Every actor needs a stuntman to help. I'm not a hero, I just play one. The hero can play anything he wants, but I'm a normal guy—I can't do that."

I glimpse Li's double traversing to a corner, his name is Didi and as it turns out, he's the younger brother of a fight choreographer employed on the MARTIAL LAW television series.

Li's Hong Kong legacy includes the OUTCH series (I through III & VI), TAI CHI MASTER, NEW LEGENDS OF SHAOLIN, FONG SAI YUK I & II, LAST HERO IN CHINA and the dynamic INDIANA JONES clone, DR. WEI AND THE SCRIPTURE WITH NO WORDS. Many of Li's films are not accessible from your regional retailer, but are available through Tai Seng Video (1-888-668-8338).

After a brief rehearsal, Li pumps up for a scene where he's required to fight Kaa, the bad guy feverishly played by Russell Wong. We all watch Li trying to perform a few wire gags but he injures his ankle and wrist. It's time for me to depart.

Back outside, I ask Aaliyah why the ROMEO MUST DIE script appealed

## AALIYAH

**"I wanted to do all of my own stunts. The toughest thing for me? The emotional scenes... I really want to be a vampire in a vampire flick. Those films are so cool. I love horror movies."**



Jet Li (w/ Aaliyah): "The difference between movies made in America & Hong Kong? The budgets in Hong Kong are much smaller and we work longer days."

enough to the youthful entertainer to qualify as her film debut.

"People know me as an artist already and I have a certain image to uphold," she shrugs. "So for my first role, I wanted to take something somewhat similar to the Aaliyah that everybody already knows, which is someone a bit edgy. I like the story and you just talked to one of the other reasons I did the movie. I've heard of Jet Li and have seen his films before, and so I was naturally very excited to work with him...I just fell in love with him! He doesn't have to say a word on-screen because he has this presence, and I also thought this film would be a good move for me in making the transition from singing to acting."

Aaliyah's extensive dance background in jazz, ballet, hip-hop and African dancing all proved critical to her performance of the action/martial arts scenes.

"Corey [Yuen Kwai, Sammo Hung and Jackie Chan's "kung fu brother"] and his crew from Hong Kong trained us for preparation for the fights. We'd go in about 9:30 a.m., stretch for a while and he'd walk us through our moves, then we try them full out. And there was also the harness for the wire work. Now that is tricky, but it's a lot of fun. It's actually kind of like being Peter Pan.

"There was this awesome chase sequence, where I am in the car with Jet and we are being chased by a guy on a motorcycle who is shooting at us. So glass is exploding and smashing all around us—glass is flying all through the car and stuff. It was fun. I wanted to do all my own stunts and wanted to look good on-screen, and make sure that my fans know that it is Aaliyah doing that stuff. But, of course, I wouldn't do the dangerous ones."

"But, actually, the toughest thing for me was doing the emotional scenes. I worked a long time to get deep into myself in order to cry—and that was a great accomplishment for me to actually be able to do it on cue. In one scene, I had to do it twice and on another four times, one right after another [laughs]. I basically just had to keep the tap flowing. I'm still a novice at all of this and am still working at it. I was nervous the first time, but you just have to really concentrate."

I query about her acquiescence or reluctance to do nudity in future roles. Aaliyah says she'll "cross that bridge if I come to it." When I ask her about her "dream role," she replies without pause, "It would be to be the vampire in a vampire flick. Those films are cool. I love horror films." As a proponent of therapy to champion breast cancer and Alzheimer's disease, she's equally outspoken. Unlike her "movie star" elders, Aaliyah doesn't mount the pulpit only when cameras and/or microphones are visible. She's very impassioned.

A few final notes. Not once during the set visit did I hear anyone link the movie to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. I assume that Li is Romeo to Aaliyah's Juliet. Maybe not? Finally, as I departed Canada, no one told me that you had to pay a "leaving the airport" tax 30 minutes before takeoff. I'm looking for my wallet as the immigration officer is waiting for the money. Suddenly I gasp, "Oh my God, where's my wallet?" Staying calm, I remember buying some beanie babies for the wife (she would kill for the Canadian bear Maple, so now someone does not need to die). So, once more, I'm doing the airport sprint thing. I hightail back to immigration, pay the tax and barely get onto the plane home. Lifting off from Vancouver those words came back to mind: "Adventure, adventure." □

# Jennifer Ashley

## Last of the Drive-In Divas

A WOMEN-IN-PRISON PIC & THE BIG BREAK THAT TANKED: ASHLEY (SOMETIMES) REMEMBERS HER B-FILM SOVEREIGNTY IN THE 70'S.

BY SARA BARRETT



Ashley hangs around *HORROR PLANET*, an '81 sex-sleazeberry titled *INSEMINO*. The resulting clout is gone, yet Stephenie Bechem (*DRACULA A.D. 1873*) who later surfaced on prime time in *SEAGUARD* DIV.

I met Jennifer Ashley at her favorite restaurant, Barney's of Beverly Hills, home of the \$15 cheeseburger. Ashley hands me a menu and we begin to discuss her career. "I was tested for a part in *AMERICAN GRAFFITI*. They liked me very much but I wasn't experienced enough. They went with Cindy Williams, but put me in the movie *YOUR THREE MINUTES ARE UP* ('73), one of the first parts I ever had. I have a large shoe collection and I remember I was wearing these potent leather, purple-flowered, blue and yellow shoes. They had a big close-up of them in the movie. All my shoes that have been in films have had close-ups."

Our winter approaches and Ashley orders two eggs over hard. I go with the cheeseburger. I ask Ashley about *CHAINED HEAT* (1963), a girls-in-prison saga fueled by a fraternity of B-film babes (Sybil Danning, Linda Blair, Edy Williams, Louisa Moritz). "I auditioned for that part when I was going through a divorce," she recounts. "I was really not in a good place. I was very angry. They asked me to audition for the meanest inmate. I was really angry and I let it go in the casting office. Everyone was shaking. We worked in a defunct prison for a couple of months. It was really eerie. And I really felt like I was in prison. When you go into a character study, you really



# JENNIFER ASHLEY

**"I had to be nude in CENTERFOLD GIRLS scenes. It was nicer not to have been marketed for my body."**

have to believe everything. You have to have a good imagination, because in films like this, directors don't work with you that much. In most films like CHAINED HEAT, they don't give you the opportunity to go into a character study or help you like a real good director would in a large budget film."

Speaking of a real good director, didn't Ms. Ashley play a prostitute in PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE, a 1974 cult classic helmed by Brian De Palma? "He's very creative and imaginative,"

Left: Ashley joined a sterling cast (Bette George, Fionn Lewis) in TINTORERA, a 1977 JAVEX rig-off she reunited with director Rino Candore Jr. for GUTTA: CULT OF THE DAMNED. Below: As one of THE PCN PCN GIRLS, Cheryl Smith co-starred





**HORROR PLANET** B. Ashley once again won over with assured grit, including Judy Geeson (the former tempt played purgative *Magnum* Courtney) and Victoria Tennant, who was featured—two years later—as the WIMPS OF WAR survivor. R. Reined by Norman J. Muxen (*GUINNESS SLAVE*, *ALIEN PREY*)—not a “women’s director”—Ashley suffers the consequences of alien molestation



said Ashley And—? “He’s a good director, fun to work for. I wish I had the chance to work with him on something really good.”

In between bites of lunch, we continue to talk about the diva’s film career. I inquire about *GUYANA, CULT OF THE DAMNED*, a 1980 chronicle of the Jonestown massacre, repressed with melodramatic license. Its venerable cast (Joseph Cotten, Bradford Dillman, Mel Ferrer) notwithstanding, the film was critically chastised. One liability was director/writer Rene Cardona Jr., whose credits include *BEAKS: THE MOVIE* and *NIGHT OF 1,000 CATS*. “I thought this was the movie that was going to make me really famous,” recalls Ashley, “and it was just one of these disappointments. Among friends, there’s a thing in Hollywood that you’re only as good as your last movie. A lot of my friends at the time were famous people, and they thought this was going to be my breakout movie. Well, it wasn’t, so I kind of lost contact with them after the movie didn’t do so well.”

Perusing her resume, I ask Ashley if there’s any particular film that she would have been better off abandoning. “I’m glad to have done all of them...except for *THE CENTERFOLD GIRLS* [1974]. I had to be nude in a



couple of scenes and I was really embarrassed. It’s nice not to have to be marked for my body. I’m at an age where I’m not here to expose my body for exploitative purposes.”

Ashley’s career as a drive-in diva spanned an entire decade, from 1973’s *TERROR CIRCUS* (aka *BARN OF THE NAKED DEAD*) to the aforementioned *CHAINED HEAT*. I ask the actress if the industry’s post drive-in era is more female friendly. “Women are in a lot more power these days, but

JENNIFER ASHLEY

**"Women are in a lot more power these days, but there's still a deficiency of significant female roles."**

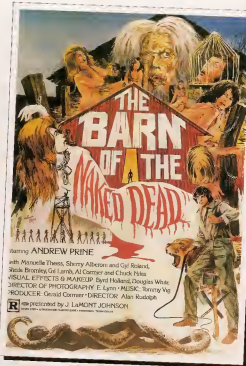
there's still a deficiency of significant female roles," explains Ashley. "The biggest change in this business came for me 14 years ago when I started doing my own cable talk show. I was in control for the first time, and I was able to pick and choose who was going to be on my show. And now, people respect me. I'll get phone calls, or I'll run into people here at Barney's, and they'll compliment it. But I miss the acting, which I'm starting to try and do again." Guests on her chat show, *ASHLEY'S CLOSET*, have eclectically swung from a pre-*X FILES* David Duchovny, to hiker Miss Tatoo.

I ask about her love life. The recently remarried Ashley related how she became acquainted with her third spouse. "We met at a picnic. I knew right away. It was weird. I had just gotten divorced and wasn't even thinking about dating. Then I saw him. And we just got together. In a nut, it's difficult to find someone who's not threatened by your tenacity and drive. I've finally met someone who's not threatened by it." I met someone like that once. He spent a lot of time on my couch.

Anyway, I finish off my lunch and notice that Ashley has separated her egg yolks from the whites. "It's better if you cut out the yolks. The whites are really good. I don't eat egg yolks."

O.K. Two eggs, over hard, skip the yolks. □

J. Ashley cropped up in *BARN OF THE NAKED DEAD* (the '73 film was directed by Alan Rudolph, who later collected awards for the critically lauded *AFTERGLOW*, *WELCOME TO L.A.*, etc.). Making it up with B-babes, she is *CHAINED HEAT*'s hottest



Starring ANDREW PRINE

with Manuelle Theriault, Sherry Alberoni and Gyl Roland, Steve Bromley, Gil Lamb, Al Corrier and Chuck Niles

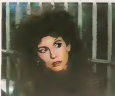
VISUAL EFFECTS & MAKEUP: Byrd Holland, Douglas White

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: E. Lynn • MUSIC: Tommy Vig

PRODUCER: David Corrier • DIRECTOR: Alan Rudolph

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L. Jennifer Ashley 2000 (striking a pose during her #1 interview). The driven goddess officiates her chat show, *ASHLEY'S CLOSET* ("I started it fourteen years ago. I was in control for the first time"). R. As a groupie in *PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE*



# J.J. RODGERS

## AMAZON WARRIOR

GIVING VOICE TO "SLIDERS" & TRANSCENDING "SORORITY VAMPIRES," SHE EMBODIES HOMAGE TO "XENA" (HOLLYWOOD-STYLE).

BY JAKE WOODS

Pinching her strawberry blonde tresses, a rather voluptuous J.J. Rodgers contemplates her role in the generically titled, mini-budgeted saga, *AMAZON WARRIOR*. But she initially briefs me on her daily grind: "I got a call back from an audition I did last week for a Route 66 Jeans commercial. I was kind of surprised. There were girls there who were so beautiful. I know I'm a long way from ugly, but these women were stunning. It can be pretty intimidating." She insists her one advantage over starlets, who compete for the same cattle call, "is I'm an actress, and most of them really aren't. I have no problem getting up there and being silly, being the center of attention. I have a lot of improv experience and I'm pretty wacky on my own. I try to use that whenever I can. Casting directors aren't used to it, at least not with women. I had one of them literally falling to the floor laughing. When we were done, he put 'hook her' by my name. He even had me come watch the tape they'd done of me, just because he thought it was so hysterical!"

It was her sense of humor



It's Jimmy Fallon vs. J.J. Rodgers' *AMAZON WARRIOR*. "I knew there'd be no training for the physical stuff until about five minutes before we would film."

that appealed to Dennis Devine, who cast Rodgers as the *AMAZON WARRIOR*. "She is so much fun," he grins. "A couple of minutes with her can improve the worst day you've ever had." Nevertheless, Rodgers admits that shooting the \$60,000 movie wasn't a barrel of laughs. "It was pretty tough," she says, "—long days, a lot of different locations. At 6:30 in the morning, I'm out in the desert somewhere freezing in that little fur bikini. And then, by midday, I'm dripping in sweat and covered in dirt. This is low budget. There aren't a lot of amenities. I just had to block it out and concentrate on the work. If you sit and think about how hot or cold it is—or how cheesy the film is, or why there's no trailers for the cast—it just isn't conducive to doing the work. I'm one of those people who has to work. I don't care what it is, I'm happiest when I'm doing something."

I liked J.J.'s range and comedic touch. She could play the more serious moments, yet she had the comedic timing to get the laughs I was aiming for. I believe the comedy in this film is critical to its success. And, in addition to being talented, attractive and dedicated, J.J. always





"My looks make casting directors think of me for leads, but my personality is off the wall enough that I'm right for character roles. They, however, would prefer to pigeonhole me."



shows up on time and is always fun to be around."

Rodgers plays "the last of the Amazon women" in the post-nuclear era. Strapped by severe budgetary constraints, the film leans on the thespian's aptitude for deftly switching into the tongue-in-cheek mode. But her performance of the genre's obligatory "action scenes" was shot sans the luxury of a carefully choreographed rehearsal. "I knew there would be no training for the physical stuff until about five minutes before we'd film it. I had to put myself in an Amazon demeanor I couldn't be whiny or act like some little girl; I had to be tough. I fell and got cut up a lot. There weren't any pads just out of sight for us to land on, only the dirt and that costume doesn't exactly offer much protection." Her background in musical theatre was applied to the combat. "I have done enough shows that I can learn a routine and follow the choreography. Stunt work is very

**L:** Rodgers strikes a pose for photos. **Jen Dusek:** "I have no problem getting up there and being silly, the creator of attention." **S:** An AMAZON WARPGIRL.



similar, so it helped."

AMAZON WARRIOR reunited Rodgers with the aforementioned Dennis Devine. She was initially acquainted with the director while shooting *SORORITY HOUSE VAMPIRES 2*. "Dennis was doing crew work on that film, which was a *BUFFY* kind of thing. Corey as hell, but cute and pretty entertaining." In another triumph of low-budget filmmaking, Rodgers emoted through *SORORITY HOUSE VAMPIRES 2* before she was cast in Part I of the franchise. Go figure. "They shot me in Part 2 while they were editing Part 1," she recalls. "I guess they found out they were short on running time, so they wrote some new scenes and added me into the first one. The weird thing is that I'm supposed to be playing the same character, but I'm the smart girl in one and a total airhead in the other. Don't ask me how that happened. Maybe an alien abduction or something."

A stage veteran, Rodgers previously surfaced in a *Femme Fatales* cover story on *Screen Queens: The Musical* (8-4). "I was in various shows from February to December last year," she explains. "I did five of them, some of them back to back, and two of them even overlapped." As one of the Santa Susana Shakespearean ensemble, Rodgers portrayed "Helena" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and "Julia" in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. "Working live, in an outdoor theater before 800 people, is exhilarating," she enthuses. "As an actress, I can't tell you how exciting it is to work in that kind of arena."

She was also cast as the evil Sea Witch, Ursula, in a stage presentation of *The Little Mermaid*. Based upon Disney's adaptation of a Hans Christian Andersen story, Rodgers' cartoon counterpart was literally drawn-out as a plump ogre. "I had auditioned for the part of Ariel's sister," she recounts, "but they asked me to read for the witch. I didn't expect to hear any more about it, but they called

**"I'm in the desert, 6:30 A.M., freezing in a fur bikini, thinking how cheesy the film is, or why there's no trailers for the cast, not conducive to good work."**



"I used to sit up late with my dad and watch old horror movies and TV shows. I loved *Weekend Update* on *USA's UP ALL NIGHT*—but I especially loved *Elvira*!"

and offered me the part. It seemed odd at the time, but I've never had more fun than playing that role. I got booed and little kids were scared of me, and I got killed at the end." The producers opted to transform Ursula from corpulent badde to femme fatale. "That's right, they made her very sexy," smiles Rodgers. "I wore this big, Snow White/Wicked Witch combo collar and a tight, tight red lycra dress. I had long fingernails, dark eyebrows and those red, red lips. I was really the kind of woman that another woman might refer to as a 'real witch,' rather than the traditional witch, and it worked great."

But she pegs a cabaret-style revue, *Champagne on the Rocks*—which she collaborated upon with her best friend—as her "proudest achievement" to date. "The show was a long time dream! It's about a pair of tall girl singers who do a lot of Andrews Sisters and white Supremes-type material," says the 5'10" Rodgers. "We had talked about doing it since college and we finally just hired a writer and musical director, and staged it at the Luna Park, which is a local club with a cabaret stage." Though the show sold out its entire limited-run performance, Rodgers is reluctant to tackle another project on the same scale. "A lot of my friends have put together a short film or whatever to promote themselves," she explains. "I know it's a good idea to do something like that but, honestly, I've never been so scared doing anything in my life as I was about *Champagne on the Rocks*. This was 100% ours. It wasn't just us up there performing someone else's material and risking someone else's money. This was all ours. I'll stick to other people's projects for a while, thank you."

Rodgers, in fact, adheres to the showbiz chestnut about her craft being a labor of love. "I've been singing since I was about two. My whole family sang and did shows as the Rodgers Fam-

ly. I've done talent shows, plays, beauty pageants. Everything. Sometimes I wish there was something else that I wanted to do, but this is it. My friends say I have a need to be the center of attention. I swear I don't try to be. It just happens."

Her panache has residually dropped into B-movies, all shot on the cheap. "Well, I did one called *SISTERS OF SIN*, which has never been released in this country." One of her co-stars was Larn Dane, who was subsequently cast as a recurrent character in *EARTH: FINAL CONFLICT*. "SISTERS is about this kind of Darkman-type hero battling against these three witches: Sister Anger, Sister Avarice and Sister Lust (sneakily smiles). I was Sister Lust."

"I was supposed to be topless in it. I think every girl in it was topless at some point, but I managed to convince them that I could show my character's sexuality in other ways. I've been very lucky that way as far as nudity and sex scenes go. I'm not saying I'd never do one, but I haven't so far. It's just so gratuitous in most of these films."

I cite a scene in *AMAZON WARRIOR* where a starlet performs an impromptu striptease. "That cracked me up when I saw it," laughs Rodgers. "It was so silly. She takes off her top to wade out waist-deep in a lake. It just made no sense at all."

Her film environment is not alien to Rodgers: she's a self-professed genre addict. "I used to sit up late with my father watching old horror movies and TV shows... I loved to watch Rhonda Shear on USA's *UP ALL NIGHT* but I especially loved Elvira." Her admiration notwithstanding, she hopes her career will eventually swing into the mainstream ("You pay your dues, you move up a rung. That's how it works and I'm finally starting to see some upward progress in it all!"). Last season, Rodgers landed guest roles on a couple of

**"The casting scene can be very cruel. Horrible, really. You have to audition in a bikini with all these women who have been silicone, liposucked, tucked and lifted."**



"Rodgers describes the \$60,000 production of *AMAZON WARRIOR* as "pretty tough." But it's among the people who just have to work, I don't care what it is."

sitcoms, CAROLINE IN THE CITY and *THIRD ROCK FROM THE SUN*. "Those kind of credits legitimize you and I'm starting to get calls for things because of these shows. I played Bambi, a cocktail waitress in a strip club on *THIRD ROCK*. I have no idea why I got these blonde bimbo roles, but it was so much fun. I was in this great outfit, very sexy. In fact, I bought it from them when the show was over. They had me in five-inch heels, which made me about six feet, three inches tall and it was just John Lithgow and me. He is the nicest man, very warm and generous with his cast. They wrote seven or eight lines more for me, and it's a really cute scene."

Though impressed with her profession, Rodgers acknowledges its dark side (i.e. surgery and sexism): "The casting scene can be very cruel. Horrible, really. You have to audition in a bikini with all these women who have been silicone and liposucked and tucked and lifted. You're reading a scene you've never seen before with some actor you've never met, who's about half your height. I got turned down for a show once because I was too tall. The casting director said, 'Great audition, I really like your voice and you're very lovely.' Then he called me over and stood me in front of a mirror. He shook his head and said, 'Sorry, you're too tall.' It can get you down."

"Another problem for me is that my looks make casting directors think of me for leads, but my personality is off the wall enough that I'm almost right for character roles. They don't like that. They want you to be one thing and one thing only. It makes it easier for them to pigeonhole you, and then ignore you for anything except that narrow little image they have attached to you."

"Another thing, people don't think about how much money actors have to spend just to be ready. There are

classes, lessons, photos. The amount of money spent is ridiculous. I've been lucky enough to do a variety of things: stage, movies, TV, even dancing and singing at some trade shows. I do voiceover work, supplying background voices on TV shows like SLIDERS. And I still wait tables when the work gets thin. I've been doing that for five years now."

Equally frustrating is the ultimate gamble: survival. An actor is dependent upon tallying character roles or graduating to A-product. The sexpot's longevity is eclipsed by a younger breed of a breathy blonde who's perpetually cloned and always waiting in the wings. "This is the one business where your abilities, your background and training, don't really mean much," says Rodgers. "You can be walking down a street or talking at a party and, if you have the look that a Spielberg or someone is looking for and they see you, it's suddenly a whole other world for you."

Hollywood is a compatible milieu for the Amazon woman. She's fueled for a "survival of the fittest" competition until the teen's expiration date (30 years old for women) runs out. My money's on J.J. Rodgers as a survivor.

Addressing the spate of Amazon warrior pix—negotiated by Sandra Bergman in marginal A-epics (RED SONJA, CONAN THE BARBARIAN) and Sybil Danning (HERCULES, PHANTOM EMPIRE, WARRIOR QUEEN) and Lena Carlsen (BARBARIAN QUEEN, DEATHSTALKER) in the B-bracket—Julie Strain insists, "The budget doesn't matter. It's the costume and sword that got me wet. Throw in a horse and I'll work for free! I rule the world." Strain—whose HEAVY METAL II heroine, Fakk II, is an apocalyptic Amazon Warrior—notes, "A sword and a fringe bikini is every man's fantasy and every girl's dream—and I made mine come true! Never underestimate the power of a horse between your legs!" □



"I have lots of legwork experience and use it whenever I can. Costing directors aren't used to it, at least not with women."

# THE MAKING OF AMAZON WARRIOR

DENIED CORPORATE REVENUE, L.A. REBELS TAILOR COMMERCE—  
INCLUDING THEIR SWORD & SORCERY SAGA—FOR “NO BUDGETS.”

By JOHN THONEN

Producer Jerry Bruckheimer has earned the freedom to stretch his budgets past the nine-figure bracket. Roger Corman and Charles Band, however, operate within the constrictions of \$1,000,000 (or less) per film. But even this bargain basement capital is comparatively extravagant when, sliding further down the scale, you acknowledge a filmmaking colony of muck-n'-dimers. It's a fragile environment where the production offices are located within the director's garage, and a budgetary addendum—like coughing-up an extra \$100—is strictly prohibited. Dennis Devine is among the filmmakers who, aspiring for a project on a more substantive scale, labor long hours for little pay and zero glamour.

Devine's latest production is *AMAZON WARRIOR*, a tongue-in-cheek vignette about a post-apocalyptic future. Shot in two weeks for something south of \$80,000, it's the sixth direct-to-video release for the Detroit native who, after finishing film school at Loyola Marymount, wrote no budget films with partner Mike Bowler. The partners debuted with *FATAL IMAGES* (1989), a tale of an apparently haunted camera which conspires to kill whenever poses in front of its lens. When the film quickly turned a profit, it



Dennis Devine supervises production of *AMAZON WARRIOR*. "Since we played a tongue-in-cheek, we decided to get by with something cheesy & campy."

was followed by 1990's *DEAD GIRLS*, produced on Devine's biggest budget to date (a whopping \$100,000). Between movies, he pays the bills with film crew work and helming direct-to-video quickies, including the episodic *THINGS* and *THINGS 2*, and *HAUNTED*, the latter a shot-on-video yarn about an antiquated theatre's ghostly presence.

He describes J.J. Rogers, who plays the title role in *AMAZON WARRIOR*, as "one of my all time favorites. As a director, I find that some actors require a lot of direction or coaching, while some require less. J.J. is an actress who needs very little direction. She understands her character, and knows how to play nearly every emotion and every action associated with

that character. On a low budget shoot, when a director is often performing many functions, an actor like J.J. is invaluable. J.J. and I adjusted a few things in rehearsal, and she was dead on during nearly every take. The amazing thing about J.J. is that she literally knows her lines frontwards and backwards. I worked with J.J. on three films and never recall doing a retake because she forgot or blew a line. Amazing."

"The producers and I did not agree on who to cast in the lead. They favored an actress who gave a strong audition, was a successful stunt woman and would play the part very straight."

An adherence to ultra-low budget filmmaking prompts a chronic case of *deja vu*. The gaffer for one

movie may function as a director or writer on the next. *AMAZON WARRIOR* is produced by Raymond Storti, an actor from a zero budget effort Devine had worked on as director of photography. Obviously inspired by *XENIA*, the film's lighthearted motif was driven by both, a creative impulse and practicality. "We had some lofty plans early on, but eventually we could see that the money was running out too quickly," says Devine, who originally visualized the film as homage to low budget spear n' sandal sagas cranked-out in the '60s. "Since we were playing it tongue-in-cheek anyway, we decided we could get by with something really cheesy and campy."

Partially assembling his cast from ads in *Dreadmag*, Devine also leaned on his unofficial repertory company "You try for good actors," he explains, "but the most important thing is that they are reliable—that they at least show up. On these budgets, just one person not showing up can destroy your shooting schedule." As a point of clarification, Devine recalls an incident that transpired during a climactic scene in *THINGS*. It was the money shot: someone discovers a killer has incarcerated 33 women in a chamber. Since the film was fueled on a no-budget, none of the talent was paid, consequently, only half a dozen



Christine Lypson as a warrior. "You try for good actors but, on these budgets, the most important thing is that they are reliable—that they at least show up."

actors showed up. "There I am," laughs Devine, "running through my neighborhood, knocking on doors and asking girls, 'Hey, would you be willing to be tied up in my garage?'" The insanity of the premise notwithstanding, Devine managed to corral about a dozen volunteers, less than half of the impromptu cast

he needed. "I started slapping wigs and dresses on guys, sticking them in the background with their heads away from the camera and I got it to work. That's the whole creed of low budget filmmaking. It's all a question of how creative you can get when something goes wrong."

While most of Devine's

**"I had lofty plans for AMAZON WARRIOR but the money ran out. The credo of low budget filmmaking is how creative you can get when something goes wrong."**

cost and crew are paid for their services, a deficiency of "deep pocket" expenses—an executive privilege reserved for corporate studios—is often a source of frustration. "Johnny Martin, an experienced stunt coordinator, came to me one day and said, 'Dennis, this scene has a campfire. We could do a fight around it and I'll let you set me on fire for an extra 100 bucks.' I went crazy. I've always wanted a burn stunt in one of my films. So I run to the Ray Storti, the producer, and tell him and he says, 'Sorry, we don't have the money.' So I shout, 'We can't come up with a hundred bucks?' And Ray says to me, 'You got a hundred bucks?' and I said, 'Well, not on me.' So we didn't do the burn stunt. We didn't do it because we couldn't afford a lousy hundred bucks... though I came close to setting my producer on fire over it."

Studio built sets and rescheduled filming are just a few more of the luxuries Devine has to live without. He recalls that a murder-by-drowning scene for DEAD GIRLS collided into some inclement California weather. "It was the coldest February in recorded history. The water is just above freezing, and we've got to throw this girl in a bikini into it. Now this is a major scene, the kind of thing you have to shoot a lot of coverage on. We shoot it once and she comes out of the water totally blue and will not, under any circumstances," do another take. Now this is a big scene in the film and I need coverage to make it work. No way is one take going to do it. So we put the bikini on the as-

stant makeup artist and get another shot, but now she won't do it again. So I talk another actress on the set into it and get one more take. One scene, three takes, three different women. It wasn't stunt doubles. It was stunt trophies."

Devine's feathered releases include THE MERCHANTS OF DEATH and VAMPIRES OF SORORITY ROW, the latter a four-day wonder—shot on video—which, notes Devine, typifies commerce produced for starvation budgets. "I wrote it, directed it, was director of photography, I edited it and was location scout. Hell, I even bought the costumes and props. You can't believe how many times you ask yourself, 'Why am I doing this?' Fourteen-hour days. People not showing up. Equipment and props that don't work, and you're not making much money. Then you see the first screening and, somehow, it's all worth it."

J.J. Rodgers with producer Ray Storti & Barry Jensen. "This is a scene invaluable to a low-budget movie."





CRIMSON NIGHTS: 1) Andrea Blais on set with agent Carl Trachsel; 2) Neo & Den Barry on a gallery set (3) cut his neck with a real fil. He turns into a vampire 3)



# CRIMSON NIGHTS

**AN EXOTIC MODEL & A N.Y. DIRECTOR DRAW A BLOOD BATH.**

By DAN SCAFFEROTTI

The vampire myth is alive and well and the lifeline of films shot on the cheap. While prepping *CRIMSON NIGHTS*, director Jeffrey Arsenault took a page from Max Ophüls' *LA RONDE*. Adhering to a revolving device, he links one character to another, all of whom are catalysts for breeding vampires. "I was looking to do something new," said Arsenault, who also helmed *NIGHT OWL*. "I wanted to do something pretty quick, pretty simple and on a small scale. I came up with the concept of something that could be shot in a relatively short period of time and finished quickly.

The only thing I didn't take into account was that the cast is actually pretty large. I wanted to do another vampire film, and one that had a stranger, erotic edge to it, so *CRIMSON NIGHTS* falls into the 'erotic horror' category. The first scene opens with two characters; then one of those characters is in the next scene with a new character, and that new character is in the next scene with someone else, and so on and so on. The tricky thing about a film like that is you need a lot of locations and a big cast. Basically, the story line is about a vampire curse that gets passed from one character to another. After they pass along the curse, you don't see them again."

The T&A quotient runs

rampant in the film, a fact the director took into account when casting *CRIMSON NIGHTS*. "It was important that I find actresses who were comfortable with nudity," he said. "The film really plays out the sensual and erotic aspect of vampirism. The eroticism is comparable to something you'd see in one of the films in the *WITCHCRAFT* franchise. In fact, that's what I told the actors who were a little uncertain what they were getting into and I'd tell them how to prepare for it. I told them to go to a video store and rent one of the *WITCHCRAFT* films. If they didn't have a problem with the nudity in that, they won't have a problem with the nudity in my film."

The cast includes Sasha





**"I wanted to do something pretty quick, simple and on a small scale. I wanted to do another vampire film and one that had a stronger erotic edge."**

Graham, a talented actress stuck in a quagmire of quickie video commerce, as well as Tina Kriege, LG Taylor and Andrea Bero. "I found Andrea to be very smart," noted Arsenault. "She was very, very sharp." At the auditions and, of course, is very beautiful. When I first met her, I wasn't quite sure what character I wanted to cast her as but, during the casting process, it just seemed right that she was appropriate for a character called Louise. She was so right, in fact, that I didn't even have her come to a callback, which is unusual. I normally see people two or three times before I make a casting decision. But there was just something that clicked."

**Left:** Tina Kriege, often a victim in underground misogyny, graduates to a vampire role in *CRAMSON MURKITS*. **Right:** Andrea Bero vamps Don Berry. "It is weird, there's no biting, no fangs."





**"I don't take acting lessons. My mom said, 'If you can act in life & fool people, you can act in a film because life is a stage.' Life is my acting teacher."**

Born in Hungary, Biro—who immigrated to America when she was seven—has only recently flirted with the film industry. Her youthful appearance and casual beauty have both helped and hindered the young model. "I look very young for my age," sighed Biro, "and I'm also five feet tall. I knew that if I wanted to get into legitimate modeling, I would have to be at least five feet, seven inches. So I decided to take the back road to modeling and eventually try to get into movies. Today, movies have partial or full nudity. What other assurance can you give a director that you'll do nudity than to have a background in men's magazines? In the magazine field for nude modeling, my youthful ap-

**L.** Andrea Biro poses for Duane Poiroux. "She is very beautiful and very sharp," says director Jeff Rosenzweig. **R.** Slated on the set with Gan Berry



pearance has helped me. But with certain roles that I've wanted to play, it's actually held me back—they'll say I look too young and they don't want to take the risk. Even though they'll have me on file, they'll probably get harassed with certain movies! So, hey, a lot of directors don't want to take the risk."

Biro's first nude modeling assignment landed her on the cover of *TiME* magazine's Christmas issue. "It was strange and awkward...at the same time it was fun," she said. "Because I was on the cover, that issue almost sold out on the stands. Everybody was really nice to me and Ansell Adolfsen, the photographer, was really cool. She is a really wonderful woman to work with."

Biro applies a rigid discipline to her choice of modeling gigs. "I've wanted to keep it to no single photo shoot," she said. "I've never done a girl-girl shoot. I've never done a guy and girl photo shoot. I've only done single photo shoots, and I've turned down roles in erotic films because I don't want the label of a porno star." As a teenager, Biro practiced dance routines which included ballet, tap and jazz, but her diligence was prompted less by the art and more as a defense mechanism. "I had no figure," admitted Biro. "I was a very skinny girl when I was younger. I looked like a little stick figure that you drew when you were in preschool. Dancing helped evolve most of my figure, giving form to my legs and my body. It helped me present myself a lot better."

Working the print medium for almost two years, Biro has appeared in over a dozen magazines. To maintain a bit of anonymity while still building a fan base, Biro camouflages under a "Nina" pseudonym for her nude shoots. "I try



CRIMSON NIGHTS: Nina Kravitz (l) is seduced by Jeff Ansell, whose previous vampire film, *NIGHT OWL*, starred Caroline Munro. R: Blood lust w/ Kravitz & Lev Gornov



to use Nina as much as I can because my fans know me as Nina," she said. "I try to keep that so the fans can follow and know it's me."

When pressed to describe her career goal, Biro replies, "I want to be at least one issue of *Cosmopolitan* or *Mademoiselle*."

Her lack of experience notwithstanding, the young model has recently landed small roles in several films.

"I'm not taking acting lessons," she reaffirmed. "I've never taken one in my life. My best teacher is life. My mom always told me, 'If you can act in life and fool people, then you can act in a movie because life is nothing but a big TV series or a big stage.' Life has been my biggest acting teacher."

The ingenue plays an angst-plagued adolescent in **CALL ME TOMORROW**

"I'm this seductive girl who steals the lead's boyfriend," she grins. "She gets into a fight with her boyfriend and I bare him away from her. When she confronts me, I get out of the situation by seducing her. The producer was also the lead. I don't remember her name, I'm bad with names. I just do my part and leave."

Cast in **PSYCHO SEX-UAL**, she cruised to the film's Long Island location to participate in a bizarre dream sequence. "That was a fun movie," said Biro. "This psychotic guy is in the hospital under a lot of tranquilizers and is being sedated. He remembers a girl from his past. I'm lying on the beach and he comes out of nowhere and just bites me."

A hit of "new millennium" Grand Guignol, **CRIMSON NIGHTS** is composed of several vignettes which introduce, and then handle off, a dramatic personae of characters. Biro plays a blissful soul who returns home with a rather dubious buddy. "My character, Louise, gets killed by a vampire and then turns into one, herself," she noted. "It was fun to do. The thing that's weird is that there is no biting involved. No fangs. I invite a friend over not knowing he's a vampire. We have dinner, it turns into a very romantic scene and we start making out. Suddenly, he slices my neck open with a letter opener and sucks out my blood. I then turn into a vampire. I seduce a guy in the gallery and cut his neck with a nail file, and he turns into a vampire...and the process goes on."

Was the role a learning experience? "Sure, I never knew how to kill a person and it helped me to learn how to do that," said Biro. "I never died in a film so it helped me to make dying look realistic." □

## FATALE ATTRACTIONS

continued from page 5

Wynnie who, along with Friedman and Lewis, provides a commentary track for the films. "And both, 2000 MANIACS and COLOR ME BLOOD RED, have about 14 minutes each of unseen footage."

●Based upon HEAVY METAL: F.A.K.K. 2, this summer's full-length, animated saga, Mutual Entertainment has developed a PC game that adds some longevity to the tough-titten character. Embodied by ex-entertainment empress Julie Strain, F.A.K.K. 2 is a "sci-fi" icon for the new millennium. The interactive game sticks to the film's scenario: years after defeating Lord Tyler, the heroine gathers outcasts of the universe and returns to her home planet, which has been devastated by her nemesis. She reconstructs her community into the bountiful Eden. But evil is not tranquil: A meanie space ship, the size of a sun, plows through the universe. The vessel devours worlds as it moves toward its final destination: Eden. And, at the helm, is a tyrannical Geth. In the third-person 3D action game, the player controls the heroine in the war she wages against Geth Industries. For a preview, check out "Gathering of Developers" Macromedia's interactive-PC game ("Measure" rating, 17+); a trailer for F.A.K.K. 2 is included—and it rocks! Go for further info, tap in to [www.godgames.com](http://www.godgames.com).

●More whimsical in nature are the fantasy renditions of pop-up artist Monte Michael Moore ([www.mmonte.com](http://www.mmonte.com)). The illustrator creates black and white pencil sketches as a final product, in addition to full-color pictures for books and magazines. His art has graced covers designed by Wizards of the Coast, the company that owns Dungeons and Dragons and Magic: the Gathering. Recently, Moore completed the cover for *Rebels and Tyrants*, a novel in the Dragonlance series.

These works have been compiled in *Masterpiece: The Art of Monte Michael Moore*, a 64-page book from SQP Publishing. "I'm influenced most by fantasy," said Moore. "I grew up playing Dungeons and Dragons, and doing things like minotaurs and dragons and swordplay and that sort of thing. I never started out wanting to do a lot of pencil art work, but that's what I started to get known for. A lot of people sketch their drawings or their paintings first with pencil and then paint them. I would actually do each pencil draw-



This Michael Moore rendering, included within his children's book, earned the fantasy artist an award for Best Black and White Illustration (1998 World Fantasy Art Show).

ings anywhere from 18 to 30 hours. Not that many artists work in finished black and white because they think it takes color to sell art work, not just quality. I do a fair amount of color work but, as far as my fans go, I sell just as much black and white as I do color."

The book's color cover illustration, titled *Call the Dragon*, offers a pair of drop-dead gorgeous angels, one rendered with white wings and hair, the other with black wings and hair. Moore explained: "I changed her hair color so I would match with the black wings, which was actually her idea. I told her I was thinking of doing a cover with some angels on it and she said, 'Wouldn't it be cool to have an angel with black wings instead of white?' I thought that was a great idea. Input from the model is more a reflection of herself."

grit, while the artist's fertile imagination produced the other. "The reason the angel with the dark hair doesn't look exactly like Slayers is because I painted her with black hair," Moore explained. "I changed her hair color so I would match with the black wings, which was actually her idea. I told her I was thinking of doing a cover with some angels on it and she said, 'Wouldn't it be cool to have an angel with black wings instead of white?' I thought that was a great idea. Input from the model is more a reflection of herself."

Among the other celebrities featured within the book, *Playboy* model Alley Baggall seems several pages, including a sketching which translated her into an aquatic vision. FF scribe Wicked City siren Roseanne Michaels (3-4) sprouts a pair of wings. Denver model Krista Foster appears as a ghoul who's lean and mean and Krystal Towers—Miss World Exotic Dancer, 1995 and '96—sports a brace of petals and a mini-hat for her muse. The robust appeal of FF cover woman Rebecca Parris (2-4) required nothing less than two pages for her transformation into reemad. Perthshire Pet Melissa Wolf is posed beside a futuristic motorcycle in "Blast 4 Speed," one of Moore's best-selling prints.

When he started work on *Call the Dragon* art, Moore wanted to do "something decidedly different. Something was lacking. Unlike novel covers, my art didn't communicate a story. A novel cover tells a story that intrigues a reader. 'What's going on here?' Since I'm my own art director on the book, I wanted something going on. My idea on the cover was that there were these two angels who were caught up in the middle of this scene, but they didn't really know what was going on around them. The angel in white has her foot on a dragon made out of stone. There is a little 'geyser-wizard' in the background. I wanted the suggestion that he's casting a spell, waking up the dragon that is literally wrapped around these two angels and they don't even know he's there. The other angel is looking up in the sky and there's a kind of a storm going on, what with dark clouds, lightning and an impending eclipse. The wind is starting to pick up and she's beginning to realize something is going on here. I put a lot of little things into the scene, like the staff one angel is holding is actually another angel whose pair of wings make the blade."

●So what is a "Clamp"? Publisher Remy Dunaway describes it as "an all-female animation studio in Japan." Palen Pictures and Manga Entertainment is releasing *X*, Clamp's anime film based upon a popular manga. Kikum, a young man who holds the very future of civilization in his hands, must choose to destroy one of two opposing armies, the Dragons of Earth or the Dragons of Heaven. A couple of warriors, Haruto and Kikou, portend visions of the outcome and aim themselves to insure their own prediction prevails. □



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